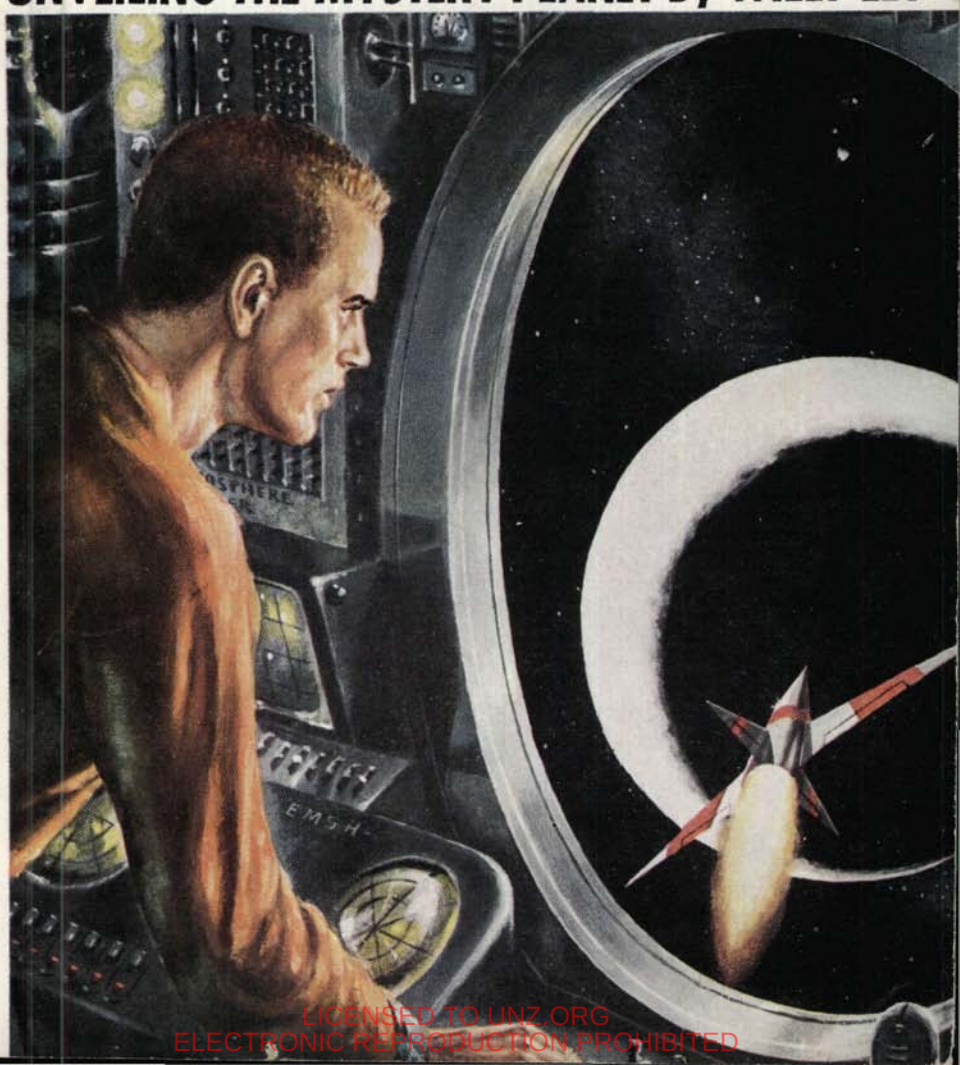
Galaxy

SCIENCE FICTION

SEPTEMBER 1955

35c

UNVEILING THE MYSTERY PLANET By WILLY LEY



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ENRICHED READING

▼ GALAXY *Science Fiction* contains the finest plot ingredients . . . carefully selected from thought-ripened ideas . . . employing only the most convincing characters and conflicts, human or otherwise . . . and blended by master craftsmen into intellectually and emotionally nutritious stories.

▼ GALAXY is guaranteed to be touched by human hands in every stage of production—it is positively NOT machine-made fiction!

▼ Twelve issues of GALAXY will supply your minimum annual requirements for mature, believable science fiction.

▼ The price is 35¢ a copy, $3.50 a year. Add $1 per year on foreign subscriptions (70¢ less than newsstand price) and the address is . . .

GALAXY PUBLISHING CORP.
421 Hudson Street
New York 14, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SEPTEMBER, 1955 VOL. 10, NO. 6

Galaxy

SCIENCE FICTION

ALL ORIGINAL STORIES • NO REPRINTS!

CONTENTS

NOVELETS

LITTLE ORPHAN ANDROID ..... *by James E. Gunn* 4
ONE FOR THE BOOKS ..... *by Richard Matheson* 59

SHORT STORIES

HUNTING PROBLEM ..... *by Robert Sheckley* 35
THE FREELANCER ..... *by Robert Zacks* 76
END AS A WORLD ..... *by F. L. Wallace* 92

BOOK-LENGTH SERIAL—Conclusion

PREFERRED RISK ..... *by Edson McCann* 100

SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ..... *by Willy Ley* 47

FEATURES

EDITOR'S PAGE ..... *by H. L. Gold* 2
FORECAST 75
GALAXY'S FIVE STAR SHELF ..... *by Groff Conklin* 89

Cover by EMSH Illustrating UNVEILING THE MYSTERY PLANET

ROBERT GUINN, Publisher — H. L. GOLD, Editor
EVELYN PAIGE, Managing Editor — WILLY LEY, Science Editor
W. I. VAN DER POEL, Art Director — JOAN De MARIO, Production Manager

GALAXY *Science Fiction* is published monthly by Galaxy Publishing Corporation. Main offices: 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, N. Y. 35c per copy. Subscriptions: (12 copies) $3.50 per year in the United States, Canada, Mexico, South and Central America and U.S. Possessions. Elsewhere $4.50. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, New York, N. Y. Copyright, New York 1955, by Galaxy Publishing Corporation, Robert Guinn, president. All rights, including translation, reserved. All material submitted must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. All stories printed in this magazine are fiction, and any similarity between characters and actual persons is coincidental.

Printed in the U.S.A. by the Guinn Co., Inc. Title Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FALL LIST

AS LONG as Critic Conklin has sent a small poacher into editorial territory (see his *Five Star Shelf* in this issue), there's no reason why I shouldn't invade his domain. Poor chap, he doesn't stand a chance; I can do a job of really creative criticism by reviewing books before they are written.

Here, for example, is the fall list for 2055. If you want to order any of the titles, incidentally, please use the currency required. And, of course, you'll have to wait until publication date for delivery.

Mars Wants You! by Quentin Jones, D.D.S. Marsport Press; 6 reels, 15 credits

Disguised as a travelogue, this is a blatant appeal to dentists to come to Mars. No one who has ever chipped a tooth on the encysted sand in Martian food can dispute the real need for dentists there, but recruitment should be on an honest basis instead of phony glamor.

There's the usual stuff about the flight from Earth, the canals — as if there were something fresh to say on the subject — and the author dares to present the "ruins" without a word of explanation!

I Made the Martian Ruins by Mario Li. LLDay, Niceville; 2 reels, 5 credits

If this had been brought out before the author's death a generation ago, it would have been an important book. That delay, however, fits the irony of Li's life; the greatest architect of his day, yet his big work — if the Mars Company had had its way — would have remained forever anonymous.

For it was he who built the "cities" of Mars when it was discovered that the authentic Martian artifacts had no tourist appeal.

Now his posthumous tragedy is that his revelation is nothing of the sort. Still, it's an exciting account of the secrecy and ingenuity involved in designing, executing, transporting and erecting the "ruins." And they *are* better than the artifacts, a proof of Mario Li's genius.

The Android Scandal by Shawn Brody. 21st-Century-Wolff; 3 reels, 9 credits

Yes, Brody is back again with another of his beefs about the — to him — shamefully slow development of artificial life.

I'll wearily explain again in

(Continued on page 144)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LONG-PLAYING 33⅓ R. P. M. HIGH-FIDELITY

10 MASTERPIECES FREE!

NO STRINGS ATTACHED!

COMPLETE TO THE LAST NOTE ON TWO LONG-PLAYING DISCS!

MOZART
Symphony No. 26 in E Flat, K. 184

BEETHOVEN
Piano Sonata No. 24 in F Sharp, Opus 78

BRAHMS
The Academic Festival

BERLIOZ
The Roman Carnival

VIVALDI
Concerto in C for Two Trumpets and Orchestra

WAGNER
Die Meistersinger, Prelude, Act 1

BACH
Toccata and Fugue in D Minor

DUKAS
Sorcerer's Apprentice

MOUSSORGSKY
Night on Bald Mountain

CHOPIN
Fantaisie-Impromptu, Op. 66

NO PURCHASE OBLIGATION *EVER!*
FULL MEMBERSHIP PRIVILEGES!

THESE 10 masterpieces are yours FREE! Brilliantly performed by world-renowned artists. Custom-recorded on distortion free vinylite discs. Reproduced with a tonal fidelity encompassing *the entire range of human hearing* (50 to 15,000 cycles). This amazing offer is made only to demonstrate the superb quality of our recordings, and to show you the advantages of trial membership in the Musical Masterpiece Society.

HOW CLUB OPERATES: Future monthly releases are described to you in advance. Those you want are sent to you for a 5 day FREE home trial. *Only* the records you decide to keep are billed to you at the Member's low price of just $1.65 per disc (average playing time 40 min.). *Saving you 40% off the usual retail price.* This "give-away" offer may soon be withdrawn. MAIL COUPON NOW with 25¢ to help cover postage.

The Musical Masterpiece Society, Inc., Dept. 76-9
43 West 61st Street, New York 23, N. Y.

Enclosed is 25¢ to cover postage for the recordings of 10 masterpieces listed. Enroll me as trial member. **Privileges:** No purchase obligation *ever!* Advance notice of releases. 5 day free trial on any discs. I may reject records before or after receipt; may cancel membership at any time. For *future* l.p. discs I keep, I'll pay only $1.65 each plus shipping. **Limit: Only one sample package per customer.**

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

CANADA, address: 105 Bond St., Toronto 2, Ont.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anyone could get divorced, win a pardon from prison, go into bankruptcy — those were snaps compared to the problem of coping with a . . .

Little Orphan Android

By JAMES E. GUNN

Illustrated by EMSH

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE SCORE was tied at the top of the ninth. It was the seventh and crucial game of the all-time World Series between the Giandroids and the Yandroids. The bases were filled. At the plate, Babe Ruth smiled and pointed toward the center-field bleachers. Carl Hubbell started his windup —

And the doorbot, in its crisp, English voice, said, "C.O.D. for the master."

Boyd Crandal sighed resignedly, switched off the home-theaterbot and said, "Roll it in."

With a grandiose sweep, the door swung open, revealing the most spectacular redhead Crandal had ever seen. She was built along more womanly lines than was the fashion these days among the thespiandroids, but Crandal liked it.

"C.O.D.?" He strangled over the question, struggling up out of the chairbot's embrace.

The redhead smiled like an angel. "Not me. I'm merely leading a confused porterbot by the hand. You are Boyd Crandal, aren't you?"

A real, live woman! Crandal hadn't seen a woman since — since — he couldn't remember when he had seen a real, live woman.

He nodded mutely.

"Then this is for you," said the woman. "It was trying to de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liver the package next door." And she was gone.

BEFORE Crandal could reach the door, the porterbot had rolled into the room from the hall, blocking his way, and all Crandal could see was the "S.O.E." of the Prime Directive printed across its front panel.

It stopped in the middle of the room and deposited its burden on the floor like a chicken in the zoo laying a large and uncomfortable egg. The package was an oblong, plastic box, just about the right size and shape for a coffin.

"Ten thousand bills, please," said the porterbot.

"Ten thousand *what?*" The redheaded vision faded.

"Bills, sir, bills."

"Bills, yes, but for what?"

The porterbot's neck craned as if it were considering its navel, but it was, after all, nothing but a glorified machine. "The full order number is A dash MP parenthesis CT end parenthesis dash zero zero one three —"

"A!" Crandal repeated.

"A is for Android," said the porterbot helpfully.

"I know what A is for," Crandal snapped. "But I didn't order any android. At least," he hesitated as a sliver of doubt insinuated itself into his mind, "I don't think I did."

A transparent window opened in the porterbot's shell back. "Are you Boyd Crandal?" it inquired.

"Yes."

"Is this your mark?"

Crandal edged over to it. It *looked* like his mark, but only a handwriterbot could be sure. "I guess you've had it checked," he muttered.

"Naturally. Ten thousand bills, please."

Crandal turned toward the the desk. Did he have ten thousand bills? He didn't remember ordering the android, and he didn't remember how much money he had in the bank.

HE RUBBED his forehead confusedly with one hand. One minute he'd been sitting quietly in his chairbot; happy, enjoying life, a sound, unassuming member of his society, a sincere dilettante, and the next minute a black gulf had opened under him. He had been sitting over a trap door to Hell.

"Well," he said to the bankerbot, "what's the balance?"

"As of nineteen hundred hours this date," said the bankerbot in a concise, financial voice, "your balance is twenty thousand two hundred and seven bills. Outstanding payables: four hundred and nineteen."

Crandal's massaging fingers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tightened convulsively on his forehead. *So little?* Paying for the android would take more than half. "Any other assets?" His voice shook a little.

"Equity in household robots: one thousand seven hundred and twenty-four. Remaining on contract: two thousand three hundred and eighty-three. Minimum monthly expenses: one thousand one hundred and fifty-two bills, including rent of this and adjoining apartment. No anticipated income."

Crandal drew in a single, shuddering breath.

Even without this android, his savings would last little more than a year. And he *had* to pay for the damn thing. An order was an order, whether he remembered it or not.

And robots didn't make mistakes.

He didn't dare deny ordering it. The doctorbots and the physiciandroids might consider his memory-lapse grounds for an exploratory. At the least, the psychoandroids would get a crack at him.

He groaned. "Make out a check for ten thousand bills to —" He turned questioningly toward the porterbot.

"Bearer," it supplied.

The desk chattered to itself and presented him with an imprinted check. Crandal made his mark with a trembling hand. "Here," he said.

The porterbot accepted it with a gracious suction plate and then cautiously passed the check under a scanner. "Thank you, sir," it said unctuously, and reeled out a small sheet of paper. "Your receipt, sir."

Crandal took it in a numbed hand, and the porterbot backed into the hall toward the waiting elevatorbot. As soon as the doors closed, Crandal sank dazedly into the chairbot.

What a frightful mess. He had less than 10,000 in the bank. His obligations were greater than his assets by almost 1,000. His continuing expenses would be 1,152 a month. And he had no anticipated income.

How was he going to live? How did a man live without savings or income? He couldn't.

But the worst part was that he couldn't even remember how he had got into such a fix. Suddenly, without his suspecting it till now, a chunk was missing out of his life.

SOMEHOW, somewhere, he would have to find a job. What could he do? What were his talents? He sat tautly in the chairbot, a slim, dark-haired young man of forty-one chewing a ragged fingernail, and he couldn't think of a single thing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that anyone would pay him to do.

Men just didn't do anything any more. The robots and the androids did everything.

Compete with them? Impossible. The robots were built to specialize in one job, and they did that job as cheaply and efficiently as it could be done. And the more complex androids, whose capabilities were broader, had faultless mechanical memories and skills imprinted like circuits; their minds not distracted by stray talents, autonomic nervous systems and emotional imbalances.

Compete with machines like these? Anything a man could do, they could do better and cheaper.

The world ran on A-power — android-power, that is. Six days Man had once labored, and on the seventh day he'd rested. It was now the era of the no-day work week. Every day was Sunday.

The result: Man had health, longevity, a sufficiency of the world's goods, and infinite leisure in which to enjoy them.

The world was a very good world indeed.

It was nothing to give a man a complex to feel inferior about. Crandal hadn't felt frustrated. Why should he worry?

The robots and androids were nothing but glorified machines, and a machine was nothing but a glorified tool. It was a truism that a man and a machine were better than a man alone.

A man with a plane could smooth a board faster and better than a man with his bare hands. Why should it bother him, then, if a slightly more complex tool could work harder and better and faster than he — could outperform him in sports and arts and sciences, as well?

Why worry? Man's only indispensable talent was consuming. All a man had to do was relax and enjoy himself.

Why worry, that is, until he finds himself with less than 10,000 bills between him and starvation? Why worry — until his bankerbot says, "No anticipated income?" Why worry — until necessity says, "Compete or don't eat?"

Crandal pounded his forehead with a desperate fist. Why didn't he have an income? Why didn't he have any investments to pay him dividends? Why didn't he have something working for him, bringing in the bills? A robot, at least, or an android?

CRANDAL looked at the coffin-shaped box on the floor. It was square and plain and dead-white. There was a serial number etched into the top: A-MP(CT)-0013.

A was for android.

MP meant multi-purpose, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

multi-purpose meant that the android was a very valuable piece of machinery. Multi-purpose androids were worth many times the 10,000 bills he had paid. He could hire it out or sell it — well, perhaps he couldn't sell it. The cut-rate price must mean that there was something wrong with the title — or the android.

He wished he knew what *CT* meant. That was a new designator to him. He shrugged: the information would be in the Catalog. The *0013* now; that meant the model was an early one. Perhaps it was imperfect.

Crandal bent over the box — and stopped. Surely he had ordered it from the Catalog? He looked at the receipt in his hand. It wasn't like a Catalog receipt; the top was blank. The rest:

BOYD CRANDAL
Apt. 11D
Robot Arms

1 MULTI-PURPOSE ANDROID (CT), CRATED
10,000
Serial: A-MP(CT)-0013
11-9-47

And stamped across the face a large, red PAID.

The *11-9-47* was the date. Yesterday. And the apartment number was wrong. Crandal lived in 11E. No wonder the porterbot had been confused; machines don't make mistakes.

But where had he bought the thing? Oh, well. Delivery would know.

He reached again for the box and stopped again. He had a strange reluctance to open it. Perhaps it was like Pandora's box... He shook himself. It was his android, after all, and his one hope for survival. He had paid for it, and somehow the thing in the box had to earn enough to support him.

Ten thousand bills, though. A man couldn't get an ordinary field-handroid for that.

With a sure instinct, he located and touched the catch. The lid parted in the middle and folded back. Lying in the box, wax-white and still, its hands folded across its chest, was the most lifelike android Crandal had ever seen. It was beautiful, its features classic in their perfection, its synthetic skin unmarred and smooth where it showed beyond the simple white tunic and shorts.

Its eyes were open. It stared at Crandal out of plastic pupils, on its face a synthetic smile. It sat up, its hands reaching.

"Daddy!" it said.

CRANDAL staggered back. "I'm not your father!"

"Of course you are," said the android. "Man is the father of the android."

"Nonsense," said Crandal. "You are nothing but a glorified machine. Machines don't have fathers — they have manufacturers."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Silently the android began to cry, tears forming in the corners of its eyes and sliding down its waxy cheeks. "I'm just a poor little orphan android with no one to care for me."

Crandal stared at the thing aghast. *Why would anyone build tear ducts into an android?* "There, there, that's enough. Just don't call me 'Daddy.' If you must speak to me, I want you to call me 'Master.'"

The android sighed. "S.O.E., Master." It smiled mercurially. "Everything happens for the best in this best of all possible worlds." It stood up in the box, a manlike creation about Crandal's height and build but blond where Crandal was dark. "A proper relationship between android and human is essential to a smooth-running household." It stared at the room critically. "Is this the whole apartment, all of it, this one room?"

"Certainly." Crandal flushed. "Are you used to a bigger place?"

"Gracious, no! It's all for the best, I'm sure. We will be closer to each other, android and master."

"That's not what you're for!" Crandal stopped and studied the mechanical. "Just what *are* you for?"

The android's eyes snapped open. "Don't you know?"

"If I knew, I wouldn't ask. What in blazes does the *CT* stand for?"

The android frowned. Its eyes seemed to glaze over, but that was illusion; it was only a glorified machine. "I don't know," it said at last. "There are no self-search circuits in the android brain. That's all for the best, though. There's no self-consciousness, no neurosis —"

Crandal imagined a neurotic android and shuddered. "What do you *think* you can do?"

"Anything," said the android. "I have great self-confidence. Give me an order."

Crandal thought about it. "Fix me a drink. A stiff one. You'll find Quaffs under the ethyloid tap."

"S.O.E., Master," said the android dutifully and stepped out of its crate. Almost stepped out, that is. Unaccountably, its toe hit the edge of the crate. It stumbled forward clumsily, catching itself on the chairbot with a crunch. The crunch signaled the disintegration of a valuable, handcrafted Sniff filled with neoheroin.

"My Sniff!" Crandal exclaimed in anguish.

"Sorry, Master. I'll make you another."

"Get the drink!" Crandal sank thoughtfully into the chairbot. *A clumsy android?* It was a self-contradiction.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEHIND him something had crashed to the floor. Crandal cringed. "One of my beautiful, handcrafted Quaffs?"

"Sorry, Master. It slipped. I'll make you another."

"Bring the drink!"

The android brought it in the Silenus Quaff, slopping some over the edge into Crandal's lap. A strange aroma climbed from it. Glowering, Crandal tasted the mixture gingerly — and exploded. The liquid made a fine spray from his lips. "You call this a drink? What did you put in it?"

"Half and half, sir. Half from the first tap, half from the second."

"But the first tap is ethyloid, the second bitters!" Crandal screamed. "Get rid of it!"

"Allow me," said the android, accepting the Quaff. It tossed off the drink in one gulp. "Mmmm! An interesting combination."

Crandal clenched his hands together to keep them away from the android's throat. The machine was getting the better of him, and it wasn't even trying. He had to control himself. He had to show the thing who was master and find out what it was good for.

It was not a household servant or a bartender — those were eliminated.

Perhaps it was a mobile garbage disposer. But a robot would be more efficient.

"Strip!" he said.

"S.O.E., Master." The android removed its tunic. Across its hairless chest was tattooed the Prime Directive: S.O.E. — just as it was stamped indelibly in its mind. It stepped out of its shorts.

Never before had Crandal seen an android fashioned so faithfully to the masculine model. "Turn around," he said sharply.

Across the milky, synthetic flesh of one buttock were printed the letters: A-MP(CT). Across the other: 0013.

"Dress!" Crandal ordered. Here he was with a valuable, multi-purpose android (CT) — the only barrier between him and destitution — and he couldn't find out what it could do.

That it did something and did it superlatively well was beyond question.

HE PUNCHED the chairbot arm for Catalog. It appeared in the theaterbot cube. "Androids," said Crandal. Pages dropped away swiftly. "Multi-purpose." More pages dropped. "Read them." His readerbot read the listings aloud:

A-MP(BT) Businessman-type multi-purpose android 79,000

A-MP(DT) Dancer-type multi-purpose android 73,000

No *CT* model was listed.

Crandal punched for Information, and the Catalog disap-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peared. In its place was an answerbot: a receiver-speaker and two lenses that stared at Crandal like owl's eyes.

"What is a *CT* model multipurpose android?" Crandal asked without preliminaries.

"There is no such model listed in the Catalog."

"I know that!" Crandal exclaimed. "That's why I'm asking Information."

"What makes you think there is such a model?"

"None of your business! Tell me what I want to know, and keep your questions to yourself!" Crandal frowned. These robots, they were getting out of hand with their impertinence.

"Where did you learn about this model?"

"Never mind!" Crandal shouted. "Just tell me what it is!"

"S.O.E., sir, but that information is restricted," the answerbot said precisely. "It does no good to shout; I have pickups more sensitive than the human ear. If you will give me your name and address, I will see if you are authorized —"

Crandal clicked off with a vicious slap of the chairbot arm. The insolence of that robot! Refusing to obey a direct command! Restricted information, indeed! He had half a mind to report it. But then the whole ugly situation would be out in the open: the android and the memory lapse and where he had got the android —

Crandal snapped his fingers. Where he had got the android! Of course, Delivery would know.

The answerbot that responded to his summons was a twin to the one he had just talked to; Crandal hoped its manners were better.

"Delivery," it said. "S.O.E."

"This is Boyd Crandal, Apartment 11E, Robot Arms. One of your porterbots delivered a C.O.D. package to me this evening. I've lost the address of the place that sent it —"

"A moment, sir." The lenses swiveled away.

The lenses. Damn! The Catalog answerbot had a tape of him asking about the CT model. If it was really restricted, the policemandroids would soon be demanding entrance of his doorbot. . .

He shrugged. It was too late now for that sort of caution.

In less than a moment, the answerbot looked back at Crandal. "We made no delivery to you this evening, sir."

"But I received —" Crandal began.

"It must have come via Independent Carrier," the answerbot said pointedly. "S.O.E."

This time the answerbot clicked off first.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crandal sagged back in the chairbot. He was lost. For all practical purposes, the android might have come into his life out of the endless night, its talent as dark and deep a mystery as the origin of life itself.

"Chomp-chomp," said the android. "Chomp-chomp."

"What did you say?" Crandal asked, turning. His mouth dropped open. The android was sitting at the larderbot finishing the last of a meal that would have foundered a horse in the zoo.

"I said, 'Why don't you ask me, Master?'" said the android.

"Ask you what?"

"Where I came from," prompted the android.

"All right, where did you come from?"

"From the Orphanage, of course." With a pleased smile, it masticated a final elephantine bite.

CRANDAL stepped outside his door feeling like a newborn infant expelled from the sanctity of the womb: apprehensive, irritated and convinced he wasn't going to like the experience.

He had not left his apartment for months — for years, perhaps. Why should he? Everything he wanted was there or, if it wasn't, robots would bring it at his command.

He hadn't been out — or had he? Yesterday he had bought an unlisted android from an Orphanage.

Impossible. Why, yesterday he had watched the Bobby Jones-Ben Hogandroid match. Hadn't he?

He shivered. He didn't want to go out, not at all. Apartment 11F was next door. The name on the door was his. "Who is calling?" the doorbot asked politely. "The master is not in."

"I know that, you dunce! I'm the master."

The door opened for him. Behind it was a room bare of furnishings and decorations and clues to the past. It was his apartment — the doorbot had proved that — but what he had used it for he couldn't recall.

He shrugged helplessly and returned to the hall. He would give the place up. That should save a few bills.

Apartment 11D was on the other side of his door. As he passed it, he bent over, out of the doorbot's eye, and read the nameplate: LUCY SHANNON. As he read, the door swung inward and he found himself staring at a gray skirt stretched interestingly tight by a womanly breadth of hips.

"Ah, Mr. Crandal, a bit of a voyeur, too?"

Crandal straightened sheepishly. It was the redhead, looking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more feminine than ever in a tailored gray suit. Her living, breathing proximity tied his tongue. "S-sorry," he stuttered. "I — was c-curious —"

"Forget it, Mr. Crandal. No harm done." She walked quickly to the elevator door and waited, Crandal forgotten.

Crandal found himself beside her, his spine chilly in a way the theaterbot never made it. "You're going out?"

Wonderfully, she smiled. "You couldn't miss on that one."

"Er — uh — why?" he asked. "I mean — why are you going out?"

She gave him a swift, amused glance out of green eyes. "Night school."

The elevatorbot arrived, and they entered together. "Face the front, please," said the elevatorbot.

"Night school?" Crandal repeated. "What are you studying?"

"A profession."

"Why?"

Her eyes met his again; his spine turned colder. "So I can do a better job than an android."

"But you can't compete with the sheisterbots and the physiciandroids!" Crandal protested, unthinking. "No human could learn enough or be skillful enough —"

The elevator door opened in front of them. "Thank you for letting me know, Mr. Crandal," she said icily, and stalked away.

Crandal stared after the rhythmic feminine sway of her hips and cursed his loose tongue. The facts of life are obvious. If a person chooses to ignore them, that is her affair.

HE RAN TO the apartment door. It opened to let him into the street, but Lucy Shannon was gone. The street was a busy place of truckerbots, porterbots, carbots — even a few androids moving briskly about their masters' business.

But there were no people. They were home, amusing themselves, as every good dilettante should be.

Darkness had come to the city, and the streets were lightless and dark. The moving robots did not care; they scurried about their errands, missing each other narrowly through the miracle of some secret sense.

It was an inhuman scene, as if Man had suddenly vanished from the city he had built and the mechanicals had taken over.

Crandal shrank back into the doorway.

"Transportation, sir?" asked the doorbot in a gruff, pleasant voice.

"Please," Crandal breathed thankfully. "Air."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"S.O.E., sir."

A copterbot drifted down out of the night. Crandal scrambled into it and sank back in the seat with a vast sigh.

The trip took the better part of an hour. A block from his destination, Crandal ordered the copterbot down. "Wait," he said, and worked his way, watchful and cautious, down the dark street.

The Orphanage was a low, unlighted, isolated building in one of the smaller suburbs. Crandal crouched behind a row of bushes, shivering, half from the night's chill, half from an illicit excitement.

Memory stirred: *I have been here before.*

As minutes passed, he grew more certain. He had once crouched here where he crouched now; he had watched this dark building; he had waited. For what? To be sure no one would see him? That was it. It had to be. The Orphanage was outside the law.

Androids and robots were the most personal possessions a man could have. As such, they were adjusted at the factory to fit — indeed, to complement — the personality of their master. Android, robot, master; together they formed a symbiosis, almost a Gestalt.

Another man's android, insisted the psychoandroids, *is like another man's shoe: it pinches.*

But why should anyone watch Crandal? Only criminals were watched.

Well, Crandal asked himself, *am I not a criminal?*

Sure, he was. He had bought the android here. And there might be worse things. There was a hole in his memory big enough to hide a dozen crimes.

Crandal glanced behind him uneasily, but there was still nobody near. He stood up, feeling uncomfortably exposed like a single food cap on a plate, and walked to the door of the Orphanage with a briskness he did not feel.

AN EYE slotted open and studied him. "Yes?" the doorbot said in a low, harsh voice.

"I'm Boyd Crandal —"

"I know. What do you want?"

"In. I want to see your master — on business."

"Wait." The eye stared at him unblinking, but it seemed even emptier. "The master is waiting in the study," the doorbot said in a moment. The door opened. Behind it, a dark hall gaped like an empty gullet.

Crandal hesitated, entered and jumped as the door closed behind him, and felt only a little better when the hall lit up with a dim radiance. It was lined with doors to right and left, but they re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mained inexorably, flatly closed.

Crandal walked forward, thinking that only the ultimate desperation could send him on such a wild and uncertain adventure. This was a real plunge into the unknown, each step risking the deadly danger that the ground would crumble away beneath his foot.

There was no safety, not any more, not since the porterbot had brought the package. And yet Crandal felt curiously stimulated.

At the end of the hall, the door opened. Beyond it was an office lined with mirrors. Two dozen Crandals walked forward to meet him as he entered. Crandal blinked with confusion and had trouble seeing the pudgy, blond-haired man who sat behind a desk in the middle of the room and sweated.

"Back so soon?" the man said.

"YOU TELL ME," Crandal said without a tremor — and was amazed at his own boldness. The pudgy man lifted an eyebrow. "I bought an android here yesterday. Right?"

The man nodded. "So?" He wiped his forehead on a sleeve.

"I want some information about it."

"So, ask."

"What does it do?"

The man shrugged. "How should I know? I don't make 'em; I just sell 'em. *Caveat emptor*, you know."

"In this case, the seller should be a little wary, too," Crandal said softly, feeling a curious confidence in his ability to handle the situation. It seemed to be coming more naturally. "How do you get by with breaking the law like this?"

The man watched him narrowly. "You asked me that before."

"Did I?"

The man's eyes were mere slits. "You've drawn a blank, haven't you, Crandal? I thought you might."

"Suppose I have? Then I'd want to know what happened, what I bought." Crandal spat the question out: "Why did you think I might draw a blank?"

The man blinked impassively. "Why should I tell you anything?"

"Get it through your thick head: we're in this together! I bought the android, but you sold it. Before I'll keep the thing — without the memory that goes along with it — I'll bring a complaint against you for operating an Orphanage."

That shook the pudgy man. The airbot kept the room cool, but he wiped his forehead again. "All right, you win. Here's the recording." He pressed a button on the chairbot. The lights dimmed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In one mirror facet appeared another Crandal, a twin with a difference. This Crandal was sure of himself. His walk was light and quick, poised on the balls of his feet, and he had a lean, vulpine look.

That can't be me! Crandal thought in horror. *I can't have changed that much!*

"How did you know I was coming?" the mirror-Crandal asked.

In another facet of the mirror was the pudgy, blond-haired man behind his desk, sweating. He smiled. "I've got sources. Besides, your androids have been confiscated. Where else would you come? Conditioned, aren't you?"

"None of your business. What I can't understand, Greer, is how you get away with it."

Greer, Crandal thought, seizing on the name. *That was the pudgy man's name.*

The mirror-Greer shrugged. "Who's to complain? They'd be arrested, too. You want another android, I suppose."

The mirror-Crandal laughed; it was a bitter sound. "What I want and what I can afford are two different things. What can you give me for ten thousand bills?"

"A robot, you mean?"

"An android."

"For twenty thousand I can let you have a field-handroid —"

"Ten thousand."

"Nothing."

"Surely there's something." The recorded voice was taut and meaningful. "Find something, Greer. The interrogatorbot asked me where I got the androids, but I didn't tell. Only, I can't guarantee my silence forever."

Greer swallowed noisily and wiped his forehead. "Ten thousand? I've got one MP I can let you have for that."

"Type?"

"CT. Don't ask me what it means. It's a new one on me, and it isn't listed in the Catalog."

"Show me."

ONE MIRROR wall turned transparent. Behind it, in a white packing case tilted forward, was the most beautiful android Crandal had ever seen. It lay as still as a corpse, its hands folded across its chest, but its smooth, synthetic flesh and the placid perfection of its features were classic.

The mirror-Crandal's eyes gleamed with an inner triumph. "Where do you get them, Greer?"

"People die. Accidents or suicide — for some reason, there's a lot of that. Their robots and androids are put up for auction, with the understanding that the buyers will junk them for parts. I can afford to bid higher than anyone else because I don't junk them. Simple."

"If you're as thick-skinned as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an android, and you aren't afraid of the Reformatory."

"You've got a right to talk," Greer said coldly. "Well, do you want it?"

"Certainly. And with it a fifty-thousand bill policy, double indemnity for accidental destruction, the premium to be included in the purchase price."

Greer sat back, horrified, sweating freely. "You can't do it, Crandal. The android would be traced back to me."

"In the unlikely event that something should happen to this android," Crandal said evenly, "I have a hunch that there would be nothing left to trace back."

Admiration glinted in Greer's eyes. "You're clever, Crandal. But I won't do it. It's too dangerous."

"Fix it, Greer," Crandal said softly. "Forge the papers, if necessary. Doctor the tattoo. Anything. Because it can't be as dangerous as not doing what I ask."

The breath and the resistance sighed out of Greer. "All right. You've won, this time. But don't think you can blackmail me again. Next time" — his eyes squinted viciously — "I'll take a chance on murder. How do you want it, C.O.D.?"

In place of the lean, vulpine Crandal, a softer, woolier twin appeared. Crandal blinked at his reflection, but he was wiser now and more sure of himself. He had part of his memory back.

"Well?" Greer said heavily.

Crandal held out his hand, rubbing his fingers significantly with his thumb. "The policy, Greer."

Greer sweated and pulled a piece of paper out of the desk and slapped it down on the polished surface. "Take it!" he snarled. "And get out!"

Crandal took it, smiled and departed.

He had finally remembered why he had bought the android.

THE APARTMENT doorbot recognized him and swung open. Crandal stepped into the sanctum of his home and stopped, stunned. The android was ensconced in the chairbot -- the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Grapes-of-Wrath Quaff in his hand — watching with wide, plastic eyeballs, the classic battle between Jack Dempsey and Joe Louis. In the 3-D arena defined by the theaterbot, the androids shuffled and slugged in perfect imitation of their prototypes. . .

"What — do — you — think — you're — doing?" Crandal asked, emphasizing each word.

Startled, the android scrambled out of the chairbot, dropping the Quaff. It smashed on the floor, and the air became redolent with the pungent odors of ethyloid and bitters.

"I got bored, Master."

"You — got — bored," Crandal repeated, as if his ears were playing tricks on him. "Bored!" he shouted. "Androids don't get bored!"

"I do," said the android.

"Tomorrow," Crandal said in a small, deadly voice, "you're going to get a job."

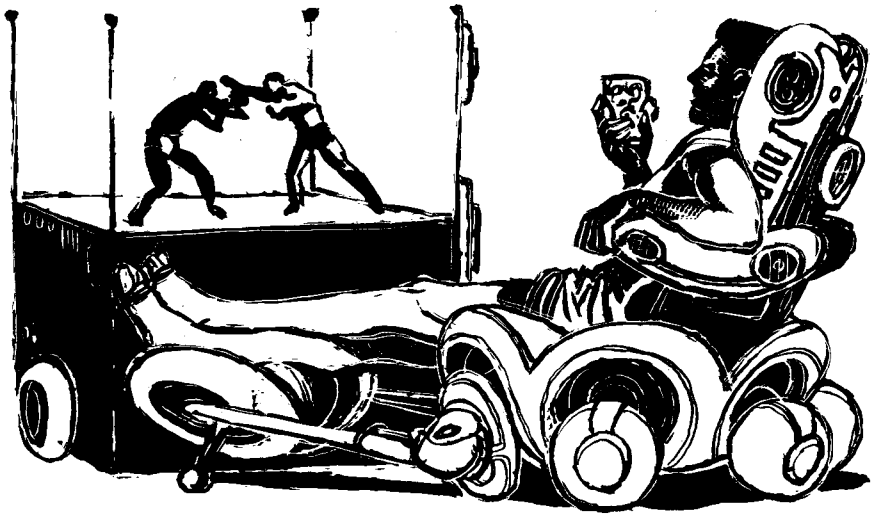
"S.O.E., Master." The android stood obediently in front of Crandal, shuffling its feet. "What kind of job, Master?"

"Tapping open-hearth furnaces, working in the deepsea mines... I haven't decided yet." Crandal snapped off the theaterbot as Dempsey staggered Louis with a short, savage right.

"But aren't those jobs dangerous, Master?"

"That's the general belief."

"But I might be damaged, Master!"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Then," Crandal said, "I will collect the insurance. Maybe," he said with anticipatory relish, "I'll rent you out as a steeplejack. You're such a clumsy android, you'd be sure to fall."

Crandal imagined the android falling — and gasped with pain as something twisted inside him. It was worse than if he himself had been twisting lazily in the air as the pavement rushed up to meet him. . .

Sweat was cold all over Crandal. He couldn't do it. The old Crandal had planned it, but he couldn't carry it through. He had the memory but not the character. He wasn't lean, confident and vulpine. He was plump, self-conscious and wooly. He was a lamb. He couldn't send the android out to be destroyed.

The thought of cruelty to this android — to any android — seemed to torment him.

The android sighed. "S.O.E., Master. Since life is disappointment, death is a kindness. I'm sure it's all for the best. We who are about to die . . . I'm hungry."

"Don't be stupid! Androids don't get hungry."

"*I* do," said the android faintly. "I'm only a poor little orphan android and I —"

"Don't be sickening. If there's anything I can't stand it's a pitiful android. Go ahead, eat something!"

WITH SAD, embittered eyes, Crandal watched the android order a meal from the larderbot that would have sufficed a cow in the zoo, and he thought: *I'm going mad. I'm standing here on my little pointed head going mad.*

What have I got? No money, no anticipated income, nothing but an android whose only observable talents are eating, drinking, and watching the theaterbot. It's a cannibal, eating my flesh, drinking my blood. . .

The mountain of food had dwindled to a mole-hill, and the android was studying the menu again. "Enough of that," Crandal said hastily. "Go stand in the corner or lie down or do whatever androids do whenever they're not working."

Working, he thought desperately. *If there were only something profitable the android could be doing! Androids, after all, weren't human; they didn't need rest.*

"The android works four hours a day," said the android. "The other twenty hours it must recharge its powerpack. For this purpose, there are footplates in the crate." It pulled the white crate into a corner and plugged a cord into an electrical outlet.

It laid itself down in the crate and folded its hands symbolically across its chest. "S.O.E., Master.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Good night." It burped.

Crandal closed his eyes and saw the electricity meter spinning, spinning, and he sank wearily into the chairbot. He touched the button that turned it into a bed. It straightened under him; the electric blanket swept out to tuck him in. He selected a slow, steamer roll, and the chair rolled, crooning softly, "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."

For the first time he could remember, it didn't soothe him instantly. He was in an awful predicament that he couldn't rock away.

Once he had had androids, but they had been confiscated. Once he had been a lean, vulpine man, but he had been conditioned. And he didn't know why.

In the process, he had lost all his money but a pittance — and a crucial segment of memory.

He had to do something about that android. If his memory were only whole again, perhaps he could work it out.

He changed the chairbot's setting to a pullman jiggle and the lullaby to "Hit the Road to Dreamland," but it was hours before he went to sleep.

WHEN HE woke up in the morning, he felt tired and peevish. He kicked the android's box. "Get up! Go find a job, any job. Just get out of here. Maybe you can bring in a few bills to pay for the current you use."

"But where shall I go?" asked the android.

Crandal caught his temper before it flew away. "We might as well do this scientifically. CT. That must have meaning. Calculator type?" He eyed the android curiously. "What are two and two?" That exhausted his own mathematical knowledge.

"Two and two what?" asked the android.

Crandal breathed heavily. "Never mind! Let's see: composer, collector, catcher . . . Catcher?" He thought of the broken Quaffs. "No. Chef? Maybe you're a chef. Try the nearest restaurant."

"S.O.E., Master." The android hesitated at the door. "I'm hungry."

Crandal suppressed a sudden flood of pity. "Nonsense," he said brusquely. "Get to work."

The android looked woebegone. This was only a trick, Crandal told himself, since it was nothing but a glorified machine.

"I'm only a poor little orphan android," it said, "and the SPCA wouldn't like this."

"The SPCA?" Something jangled in Crandal's mind.

"The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Androids, Master."

Once the SPCA had meant

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something to him, Crandal thought. He knew it, but he couldn't pin it down. "Oh, eat, then." And he watched the android put away a breakfast that would have staggered a pack of dogs in the zoo.

The android got up and walked to the door. "Farewell."

As the door closed between them, the apartment was suddenly peaceful and quiet. Crandal thought wistfully of the time before the android had arrived with his boxful of troubles.

He ordered a modest breakfast and toyed with it. Finally he pushed it away and walked into the hall. Too many things tormented him for him to relax.

AS HE WAITED for the elevator, a door opened behind him. He turned hopefully, and had his hopes fulfilled. It was Lucy Shannon in a pale peach colored suit and a white blouse that made her look wonderfully feminine and appealing. He felt the familiar chill along his spine, but she ignored him.

It continued as they entered the elevator. "Miss — uh — Shannon," he ventured, and felt vaguely encouraged when she didn't correct him, "I'm — uh — sorry about what I said yesterday."

She glanced at him and thawed a degree. "Are you really?"

"Really," he said eagerly. "I wish you'd forgive me. I've been under a strain lately. You know: insolent robots, insubordinate androids. They just don't make mechanicals like they used to. Would you believe it, I had a robot refuse to obey a direct order the other day?"

"I'd believe it."

Crandal looked directly at her for the first time, surprised. "What do you mean? Robots are made to obey orders, aren't they? Obedience is built into them; that's the Prime Directive!"

"Part of it. But you must remember that an order is only as good as the authority of the person giving it. It's a matter of position. An ordinary citizen, for instance, couldn't give an order to a policemandroid or order his household android to do something against the law."

"Well, yes, I suppose," Crandal said thoughtfully. "Only —" And he couldn't finish it.

But Lucy smiled at him, and it was worth it. "Perhaps you'd like to come to our night school some time. We study things like that. The average citizen takes his society too much for granted, and he often doesn't even know its basic laws."

"Is that where you're going now?" Crandal asked.

"Oh, no. It's a night school. I'm going to work."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You've got a job?" Crandal said incredulously. "You're competing with androids?"

The ice returned in a full, wintery gale. "Surprisingly enough," she said, stepping out of the elevator, "I am."

Crandal beat himself savagely on the forehead. Wouldn't he ever learn?

He threaded his way through the streets, dodging the rushing robots and androids, alarm growing in him. This was a different world by day — different, too, than the glimpses of the theaterbot world. This one was rawer and less meaningful. Or perhaps the meaning was merely harder to find.

Crandal was the only human in sight among the scurrying machines, and he had a crazy notion that they didn't need him. It faded, but he was happy to enter the relative quiet and peace of the library, although he was the only human there, too.

HE HADN'T been in a library since — since — as a matter of fact, he couldn't remember ever being in a library. He waited uncertainly in the big lobby until the librariandroid approached. "How can we help you?" it asked in a sonorous, bookish voice.

"We?" Crandal repeated, looking around in perplexity to see if anyone was behind him.

"A traditional expression. How can I help you?"

"I want to look through some recent newspapers," Crandal said diffidently.

"At the comic strips?"

"No, no. The news sections."

"You can't read, can you?"

"Certainly I can read," Crandal said indignantly.

"More than your name, I mean," the librariandroid explained patiently, "and a few common words."

"No."

"Then you'll want to rent a readerbot. The periodical section is right through this door and to the right."

Crandal let it lead him to the door of the cubicle, but he put the coin in himself and went in alone. He knew how to handle mechanicals. "I want all recent references to Boyd Crandal," he told the readerbot firmly.

He waited, gazing at the cubicle's blank walls, thinking idly that it would be a nice thing knowing how to read. Might even come in handy some time. But it had never seemed worth the trouble before.

"Item," said the readerbot in a gray, newsprint voice. "Journal-Americandroid, 11-1-47. 'Boyd Crandal, rising young dilettante, has been reported to the police by the SPCA for running a sweatshop . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ANDROID was waiting for him in the apartment. It was lolling in the chairbot with the Boccaccio Quaff in its synthetic hand, watching the epic race between Man o' War, Citation, and Native Dancerbot.

Crandal turned off the theaterbot with a vicious slap. "What — are — you — doing — here?" he shouted.

"That chef business, that wasn't my specialty, Master," the android said, scrambling to its feet. The Quaff dropped from its hand and smashed aromatically on the floor. The android stared at Crandal's reddening face and stammered, "I'm sure i-it was all for the b-best. It was costing too much."

"Costing too much!" Crandal screamed. "How could it cost too much?"

"They charged for all the food I ate."

"After that breakfast, you ate more?"

"That wasn't all. There was also the breakage."

"Bill payable," said the bankerbot from the desk. "Food and breakage by one MP(CT) android, serial 0013, owner: Boyd Crandal, four hundred and twenty-seven bills —"

"Four hundred and —" Crandal began wildly. "What's the matter with you? You're ruining me! What are you good for besides bankrupting your owner?"

"I'm only a machine, Master," the android whimpered. "I'm just obeying the Prime Directive. You know: S.O.E."

"No, I don't know! What does it mean?"

The android looked blank. "I don't know. I thought you knew."

"I know what the 'O' means," Crandal said viciously. "It means 'obedience.' A machine is supposed to do what it's told!"

"I try, Master."

"You try!" Crandal's eyes searched the room frantically for something with which to beat the android. Maybe some strange compulsion would stop him, but it was something *he* was going to try.

"It won't help to beat me, Master. I can't feel. A machine doesn't care. It just doesn't care. That's the way with us machines. I'm sure it's all for the best, otherwise we'd be as inefficient as people —"

"Get out!" Crandal screamed. He put his head between his hands and methodically squeezed it. "Slowly, slowly," he groaned. "Let's be logical. Maybe you're a chauffeur type. No, a robot could do that better. Collector? Couturier? That's it — clothier! Any dummy can be a model. Get a job at a men's clothing store." With a forced calm, he added, "And try, try not to eat anything

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or break anything! I'm not asking for miracles, just this one small favor."

"S.O.E., Master," said the android.

THE DOOR let him out and Crandal collapsed into the chairbot.

The item in the paper had brought back another piece of memory. He knew now how he had used the apartment next door. Once upon a happy time he had owned ten androids. Four hours a day, he had rented them out, and the lovely bills had come tumbling in. For nineteen additional hours a day he kept them working next door.

If he closed his eyes now, he could see the infinitely lovely sight of their skillful fingers twinkling at their tasks, handcrafting Quaffs and Sniffs for the luxury market, putting into them that final refuge of quality — ostentatious labor.

All gone. The room was empty, and his bank balance was dwindling toward absolute zero. All because the SPCA had reported him for running a sweatshop.

Now, even if he had the androids, he couldn't do it again. The mere thought of overworking androids made him sweat.

What had happened to him? What had Greer said? *"Conditioned, aren't you?"*

Crandal gathered himself together and pushed himself out into the world once more.

The Orphanage looked naked and ugly and smaller by daylight. And it was locked up tight. Crandal knocked on the door and listened to the echoes.

"There's no use hammering on me, you know," said the doorbot angrily. "I'm only obeying orders and there's nobody home. What's more, I don't know if anybody ever will be home. Nobody ever tells me anything."

Crandal gave up and went to the Courthouse. "My name is Boyd Crandal," he said to the recorderbot. "A little more than a week ago, a complaint was registered against me. I want to see the record of the disposition made."

"S.O.E., sir," said the recorderbot. "First booth to the left."

Crandal sat in the booth and looked at himself through the stereoscopic lenses of the judge-jurorbot. He leaned close and stared into his own eyes. Mirrored in them were the lenses and receiver-speaker of the judge. *Why,* Crandal thought in surprise, *it's nothing but an answerbot!*

A fragment of nonsense verse came to him unbidden:

I'll be judge,
I'll be jury,
Said cunning, old Fury. . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crandal corrected himself. It was an answerbot, true. But its memory was the totality of law, statutory and common, and the welter of decision and precedent from which to draw a concensus. Whatever its verdict, an appeal was futile.

THE JUDICIARY system was prompt, efficient, impartial, and unified; the decision of this answerbot was the decision of society.

"You have no sheisterbot?" the judge said.

Crandal shrugged. "What's the use? They're only extensions of the court. No, I'll plead my own case and then, at least, we won't have a monologue."

"You are charged with operating a sweatshop. How do you plead?"

"Not guilty by definition," Crandal said firmly. "An android is nothing but a glorified machine. It can't feel. It doesn't care. 'Overwork' and 'cruelty' are meaningless adjectives — sheer legalistic nonsense — when applied to androids."

"They are convenient fictions for economic necessity," the judge said in a dry, legal voice. "Morality and ethics are only different aspects of the common law. They help define what society can permit and still remain substantially unchanged."

"What difference does it make to society how hard I work my androids?"

"Remember Kant's categorical imperative: 'Act only on such a maxim as you can will that it should become a universal law.' If everyone worked his androids beyond established limits, society would be drowned in its own products. The working hours built into the androids must be accepted by everyone, or society as we know it could not exist. By working your androids overtime you became rich enough to buy additional androids which you then overworked to become even richer. It was a cumulative process whose inevitable end was your ownership of every android on Earth."

"Nuts!" said Crandal.

"In addition, there is the fact that you evaded the natural limitations implicit in the android organism. This is a threat to society and criminal *per se*."

"Well," Crandal said defiantly, "what are you going to do about it?"

"You are found guilty as charged," the judge-jurorbot said with machine coldness. "Your androids are confiscated, and you are sentenced to the Reformatory for conditioning against any repetition of this crime."

Crandal sat in the booth for a long moment after the record

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clicked off. *The Reformatory.* The word sent cold arrows into his guts.

WHEN HE got back to the apartment, the android was deep in the chairbot, its hands folded across its lap Quaffless, since the last Quaff was gone. It was watching the Tilden-Perry-Budge-Kramer round-robin tournament.

"Oh, no!" Crandal groaned.

"That clothing business, that wasn't my specialty either, Master," the android said, not moving. "I'm sure it was all for the best, though."

"Tell me. Let me know the worst."

"I was wearing the clothes out too fast."

"Bill payable," said the bankerbot. "Five suits, six pairs of shoes, eleven pairs of socks, worn out, ruined, and otherwise rendered worthless by one MP(CT) android, serial 0013, owner: Boyd Crandal, seven hundred and eighty-three bills."

"How," Crandal asked patiently, "could you wear out five suits, six pairs of shoes, and eleven pairs of socks in less than two hours?"

"That," the android said, "I seem to have a talent for."

Crandal passed a shaky hand across his face. "This is the end," he said weakly. "I can't stand it any longer. I've got to get rid of you."

"I'm a poor little —"

"Orphan android. I know. It doesn't matter. One of us has to go, and it isn't going to be me."

"What are you going to do?"

"Sell you."

"No one would buy me," the android said wistfully.

"Then I'll give you away!"

"Who would accept me?"

"I'll send you off somewhere!" Crandal shouted. "I'll order you to leave and never come back."

"You would still be responsible for my actions and bills."

"I'll smash you into tiny pieces," Crandal said in a dangerous voice, "and shovel you down the disposerbot."

"Murder!" breathed the android in an awed voice.

And Crandal pounded his forehead, feeling helpless. He had a devil riding on his back in the shape of an android, MP(CT), and he could never shake it loose. *Damn Greer!* he thought desperately. *He saddled me with this thing, and he knew what he was doing. Otherwise, why did he disappear?*

"Stay here! Don't go anywhere! Don't do anything! Don't —"

"I'm hungry, Master," the android broke in.

"Eat, then!" Crandal wailed. "But don't do anything else."

He ran into the hall, feeling,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as the door closed behind him, as if he'd escaped from hell. It was only for a moment.

THE STREET was a moving, bustling, inhuman kind of hell through which he ran, dodging and turning, trying to escape from a hopelessness that followed him relentlessly, deepening all the while.

When he stopped for breath, he was in front of the towering Remington-Randroid building, *S.O.E.* printed tall and proud across its façade. Crandal craned his neck back and stared up. Up was a long way, 150 stories, sky-tall.

The lobby was busy with androids coming and going on their eternal errands, but Crandal passed among them unnoticed and slipped into an elevatorbot. "The roof!" he said.

When he walked out upon the flat skyscraper roof, the wind was fierce and frigid around him, tugging with icy fingers at his hair and clothes. Crandal pulled his jacket tight around his chest, walked to the shoulder-high barrier, and looked out over the city. The streets were flowing rivers of mindless traffic between the stone and metal canyons.

As far as he could see, the city stretched out, sterile and inhuman. Nowhere was there flesh and blood but here, alone, upon this sterile concrete summit.

He leaned over the barrier and stared down dizzily. What was the use of going on? His home was no longer a sacred fortress; it was a place of torment from which he escaped. He had no money and no hopes of ever getting any. Ahead of him there was nothing but frustration and deprivation.

He raised himself up and leaned farther.

The barrierbot caught him by the arm. "Suicide is against the law," it said in a stern, moral voice.

"Let me go!"

"You will wait quietly, please, until the policemandroids arrive."

"I said, 'Let me go!'" Crandal repeated.

"I am sorry, sir, but I cannot obey. You will wait quietly, please —"

Crandal twisted away, leaving his jacket in the barrierbot's metal and rubberoid fingers. He ran swiftly to the elevatorbot. "Down!" he shouted.

"An alarm has been sounded," the elevatorbot said mechanically. "I cannot leave this floor until the police arrive."

Crandal jumped out of the car and stared around frantically at the bare roof-top. The whole world had turned against him.

Then he saw the door. He ran toward it. For a moment it stuck

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before it screeched open. Crandal leaped down the stairs, three at a time; leaped and turned, leaped and turned, until he was breathless and tired and incapable of running another step.

ON THE DOOR, faded numbers said: 137. He had descended only thirteen floors. He stood there, panting, staring at the door. He would never reach the ground. A cold anger began to grow in his viscera.

When it was big enough, he pushed through the door into the hall beyond. On either side of it were little, doorless, boxlike offices, an android in each of them with a desk, a chair, an answerbot and nothing else. Androids walked briskly along the hall in dark, conservative suits, looking competent and authoritative.

An *Executive type,* Crandal thought. He walked among them, and they seemed to ignore him. All the offices were occupied.

At the end of the hall was a vast room two stories tall. In the center of it was a multitude of androids at desks. Each wall was a chart, constantly changing, jagged lines in a hundred different colors and shades, rising and falling, making it a rainbow thing of beauty.

Crandal stood in the doorway, stunned, wondering what it all meant. Recklessly, he stopped a passing android. "What is all this?" he asked, awed in spite of himself.

"Step out into the room a little," said the android in a quick, decisive voice. "This wall depicts production. See how even and smooth the curves are? That's efficiency. The other three walls represent consumption, each line a different product. See how they skip and jump and vary? Now, sir, if you will come with me, we will determine your status —"

"Remove your hands!" Crandal said icily.

"Very well, sir. I must be getting on with my job."

He walked away, leaving Crandal sweating behind him. The news hadn't reached here yet. He had a few minutes left. He retreated back along the hall. He found an empty office.

"What," he said in a crisp, executive voice, "is an android model MP(CT)?"

"A-MP(CT)," said the answerbot. "Consumer-type multi-purpose android. Experimental model in its fifth and final year of tests. No price listed."

"Consumer!" Crandal exclaimed. "What's the use of that?"

"To consume, of course."

The voice didn't come from the answerbot. It came from the doorway. Standing there was a blue-clad policemandroid, smiling pleasantly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"WELL, Boyd Crandal," said the judge-jurorbot, "you are back again."

"So I understand," said Crandal.

"The charges are even more serious this time: attempted suicide, impersonating an android, receiving restricted information." The judge gave the illusion of wagging his head. "How do you plead?"

"Guilty."

"You realize the consequences? You throw yourself upon the mercy of the court?"

"Don't make me laugh! Get on with it."

"Very well. You are a recidivist. You are sentenced to the Reformatory for conditioning against a repetition of this crime with the warning that next time you appear before me you will be a three-time loser and subject to complete character reformation."

"Wait a minute," Crandal said frantically. "Aren't you going to confiscate my androids?"

"You have androids?"

"One."

"Model?"

"MP(CT)," Crandal said.

"That model is not subject to confiscation. Next case!"

The policemandroid took Crandal by the arm and led him down the long, gray hall to the door marked REFORMATORY. Crandal went dazedly, muttering to himself.

They went through the doorway and the door clicked solidly, finally, behind them. Crandal roused a little. Here he was again. Something stirred in his memory. Was he going to regain the past only to lose it again?

The policemandroid opened a door in the gray hall. "In here."

Beyond was a small room equipped with a couch, a chair, and hypnagogic equipment. Memory was returning in a flood. Crandal recognized the lights that spun in front of his eyes and the colors that flickered meaningfully, and he remembered a voice that murmured . . .

"Wait here for the psychoandroid," said the policemandroid, and withdrew. The door clicked.

Crandal looked at it. There was no doorknob on this side. Where could he go?

He sat down on the couch and rubbed his aching forehead wearily. Had it been only twenty-four hours since the porterbot had brought him the box with all the troubles in it?

The door opened. Crandal stared in shocked disbelief. It was Lucy Shannon, looking extremely feminine in a white uniform.

"YOU!" Crandal said, horrified. "A psychoandroid!"

Lucy shook her head, smiling.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Just a psychiatrist."

"I don't believe you! Take off your clothes!"

Lucy's smile broadened. "It's a little soon for that, isn't it? And hardly the place. And if I should — I can't guarantee that I will, of course — you'll have to ask me nicer."

Crandal stared at her fiercely. "Then what are you?"

"I told you — a psychiatrist and a woman — competing with robots and androids."

"How?"

"I have an advantage over them. I have a talent they don't have."

"What?"

Lucy looked at him soberly. "I'll tell you the same way you once told me. Robots are logical; people are crazy. Robots can do what is built into them and no more. The capabilities of the human animal have never been plumbed. Robots are conditioned against the impossible; people are dreamers. Robots can add two and two to get four, but it takes a person to add two and two to get five, to get the right answer for all the wrong reasons, in spite of logic —"

"I knew you before," Crandal said wonderingly.

"Yes."

"That part doesn't come back," Crandal said in confusion. "That doesn't come back at all!"

"I hope it doesn't," Lucy said. "You weren't a very nice person. Valuable, but not very nice. I like you better like this."

"Now what are you trying to do?"

"To save your recent memory from being wiped away a second time."

"Why?"

"Because we need you. We need every man who can fight free of his womb-room and do something for himself, but we need you in particular because you have more of the two-plus-two-equals-five quality than any of us. How do you think you got those ten androids of yours to work twenty-three hours a day? You rewired them and developed a new powerpack more than five times as efficient."

"I did?"

"You did. You don't remember now, but you will. The top commandroids have it now and we need it. Last time I got to you too late for anything but the delay of execution of the post-hypnotic suggestion. This time you'll resist it completely."

"I still don't understand what this is all about!"

LUCY GLANCED impatiently at the door. "As more and more of the jobs were taken over by the mechanicals, fewer people were left to give orders and have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them obeyed. Now there's nothing but androids at the top and they're running things much too logically."

"What can anybody do about it?"

"We can work our way back into positions of authority, back into positions where we can give the orders again."

"What can I do?" Crandal asked helplessly.

Lucy studied him with green, interested eyes. "You can go to night school like the rest of us. You'll learn fast: reading, writing and whatever technical information you need. We have some fantastic pedagogical devices. But during the day you'll work."

"At what?"

Lucy shrugged. "At whatever your two - plus - two - equals - five mind can do best. Maybe you can invent things for IBM or Remington-Rand. But you'll work your way up."

She glanced at the door again. This time it opened, and Crandal tensed.

"Okay," said the pudgy, blond man, wiping his sweating forehead, "you've got forty minutes. I don't like this —"

"Greer!" Crandal shouted. "You're the one who sold me that consumer-type android! You did it on purpose!" He turned on Lucy. "And you delayed my conditioning so I'd have time to buy the damned thing before amnesia set in!"

"That's not precisely true," Lucy said defensively. "We only gave you the opportunity. You bought it for your own larcenous purposes. We would have had to work out something else, though, if that had fallen through. We had to stir you out of your happy nest, somehow."

Crandal appealed to Lucy. "Can't something be done? You've got to take it back! Or can't I be deconditioned so that I can smash it up or something?"

Lucy shook her head sadly. "If I could do that, I'd do it for my-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self. Why do you think I got out and worked?"

"You, too?" Crandal said faintly.

"We'll have to learn to live with them."

Crandal groaned. "Why a consumer-type android?"

GREER spread his hands as if the answer were obvious. "To consume."

"But why consumers?" Crandal asked. "People consume."

"It's the Prime Directive." Greer wiped his forehead. "Twenty-six minutes left."

"What do you mean, the Prime Directive?" Crandal snapped irritably.

"S.O.E. Service. Obedience. Efficiency. They're the guiding principles of every robot, every android. Built into them; must be obeyed. There's only one hitch: the principles aren't weighted; one's as important as another. And the top commandroids claim we aren't efficient as consumers. Their graphs keep going up and down; they can't plan production because we're not predictable."

"But they'll replace people," Crandal gasped. "They're competing as consumers."

"And you can't compete with robots and androids," Lucy said. "You told me that yourself. That's why we have to get back on top. Now lie down. I've got to give you some post-hypnotic suggestions and there isn't much time."

Crandal lay back, and the light began to spin in front of his eyes. "Lucy!" he moaned, reaching out toward her blindly.

Her hand was cool and firm in his. "There, now," she said in a soft voice. "There'll be time enough later for everything."

He stared at the light. What had she meant by "everything"?

He remembered, just before he went under, that he would have to go home eventually. Home was where the android was. It waited there for him — with folded hands.

—JAMES E. GUNN

NEVER, EVER BEFORE, ANYWHERE!!

7000 fantasy and science-fiction books and back-issue mags at 50% to 90% under what they've ever cost you before, here or anywhere, while they last! List free.

WEREWOLF BOOKSHOP

Shannon Rd., R.D. 2, Box 86F Verona, Penna.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hunting Problem

By ROBERT SHECKLEY

A world that forgets its past is a world without a future — but it shouldn't go this far!

IT WAS the last troop meeting before the big Scouter Jamboree, and all the patrols had turned out. Patrol 22 — the Soaring Falcon Patrol — was camped in a shady hollow, holding a tentacle pull. The Brave Bison Patrol, number 31, was moving around a little stream. The Bisons were practicing their skill at drinking liquids, and laughing excitedly at the odd sensation.

And the Charging Mirash Patrol, number 19, was waiting for Scouter Drog, who was late as usual.

Drog hurtled down from the ten-thousand-foot level, went solid, and hastily crawled into the circle of scouters. "Gee," he said, "I'm sorry. I didn't realize what time —"

The Patrol Leader glared at him. "You're out of uniform, Drog."

"Sorry, sir," Drog said, hastily extruding a tentacle he had forgotten.

Illustrated by HUNTER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The others giggled. Drog blushed a dim orange. He wished he were invisible.

But it wouldn't be proper right now.

"I will open our meeting with the Scouter Creed," the Patrol Leader said. He cleared his throat. "We, the Young Scouters of planet Elbonai, pledge to perpetuate the skills and virtues of our pioneering ancestors. For that purpose, we Scouters adopt the shape our forebears were born to when they conquered the virgin wilderness of Elbonai. We hereby resolve —"

Scouter Drog adjusted his hearing receptors to amplify the Leader's soft voice. The Creed always thrilled him. It was hard to believe that his ancestors had once been earthbound. Today the Elbonai were aerial beings, maintaining only the minimum of body, fueling by cosmic radiation at the twenty-thousand-foot level, sensing by direct perception, coming down only for sentimental or sacramental purposes. They had come a long way since the Age of Pioneering. The modern world had begun with the Age of Submolecular Control, which was followed by the present age of Direct Control.

". . . honesty and fair play," the Leader was saying. "And we further resolve to drink liquids, as they did, and to eat solid food, and to increase our skill in their tools and methods."

THE invocation completed, the youngsters scattered around the plain. The Patrol Leader came up to Drog.

"This is the last meeting before the Jamboree," the Leader said.

"I know," Drog said.

"And you are the only second-class scouter in the Charging Mirash Patrol. All the others are first class, or at least Junior Pioneers. What will people think about our patrol?"

Drog squirmed uncomfortably. "It isn't entirely my fault," he said. "I know I failed the tests in swimming and bomb making, but those just aren't my skills. It isn't fair to expect me to know everything. Even among the pioneers there were specialists. No one was expected to know all —"

"And just what are your skills?" the Leader interrupted.

"Forest and Mountain Lore," Drog answered eagerly. "Tracking and hunting."

The Leader studied him for a moment. Then he said slowly, "Drog, how would you like one last chance to make first class, and win an achievement badge as well?"

"I'd do anything!" Drog cried.

"Very well," the Patrol Leader said. "What is the name of our patrol?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HUNTING PROBLEM

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The Charging Mirash Patrol."

"And what is a Mirash?"

"A large and ferocious animal," Drog answered promptly. "Once they inhabited large parts of Elbonai, and our ancestors fought many savage battles with them. Now they are extinct."

"Not quite," the Leader said. "A scouter was exploring the woods five hundred miles north of here, coordinates S-233 by 482-W, and he came upon a pride of three Mirash, all bulls, and therefore huntable. I want you, Drog, to track them down, to stalk them, using Forest and Mountain Lore. Then, utilizing only pioneering tools and methods, I want you to bring back the pelt of one Mirash. Do you think you can do it?"

"I know I can, sir!"

"Go at once," the Leader said. "We will fasten the pelt to our flagstaff. We will undoubtedly be commended at the Jamboree."

"Yes, *sir!*" Drog hastily gathered up his equipment, filled his canteen with liquid, packed a lunch of solid food, and set out.

A FEW minutes later, he had levitated himself to the general area of S-233 by 482-W. It was a wild and romantic country of jagged rocks and scrubby trees, thick underbrush in the valleys, snow on the peaks. Drog looked around, somewhat troubled.

He had told the Patrol Leader a slight untruth.

The fact of the matter was, he wasn't particularly skilled in Forest and Mountain Lore, hunting or tracking. He wasn't particularly skilled in anything except dreaming away long hours among the clouds at the five-thousand-foot level. What if he failed to find a Mirash? What if the Mirash found him first?

But that couldn't happen, he assured himself. In a pinch, he could always gestibulize. Who would ever know?

In another moment he picked up a faint trace of Mirash scent. And then he saw a slight movement about twenty yards away, near a curious T-shaped formation of rock.

Was it really going to be this easy? How nice! Quietly he adopted an appropriate camouflage and edged forward.

THE mountain trail became steeper, and the sun beat harshly down. Paxton was sweating, even in his air-conditioned coverall. And he was heartily sick of being a good sport.

"Just when are we leaving this place?" he asked.

Herrera slapped him genially on the shoulder. "Don't you wanna get rich?"

"We're rich already," Paxton said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But not rich enough," Herrera told him, his long brown face creasing into a brilliant grin.

Stellman came up, puffing under the weight of his testing equipment. He set it carefully on the path and sat down. "You gentlemen interested in a short breather?" he asked.

"Why not?" Herrera said. "All the time in the world." He sat down with his back against a T-shaped formation of rock.

STELLMAN lighted a pipe and Herrera found a cigar in the zippered pocket of his coverall. Paxton watched them for a while. Then he asked, "Well, when *are* we getting off this planet? Or do we set up permanent residence?"

Herrera just grinned and scratched a light for his cigar.

"Well, how about it?" Paxton shouted.

"Relax, you're outvoted," Stellman said. "We formed this company as three equal partners."

"All using *my* money," Paxton said.

"Of course. That's why we took you in. Herrera had the practical mining experience. I had the theoretical knowledge and a pilot's license. You had the money."

"But we've got plenty of stuff on board now," Paxton said. "The storage compartments are completely filled. Why can't we go to some civilized place now and start spending?"

"Herrera and I don't have your aristocratic attitude toward wealth," Stellman said with exaggerated patience. "Herrera and I have the childish desire to fill every nook and cranny with treasure. Gold nuggets in the fuel tanks, emeralds in the flour cans, diamonds a foot deep on deck. And this is just the place for it. All manner of costly baubles are lying around just begging to be picked up. We want to be disgustingly, abysmally rich, Paxton."

Paxton hadn't been listening. He was staring intently at a point near the edge of the trail. In a low voice, he said, "That tree just moved."

Herrera burst into laughter. "Monsters, I suppose," he sneered.

"Be calm," Stellman said mournfully. "My boy, I am a middle-aged man, overweight and easily frightened. Do you think I'd stay here if there were the slightest danger?"

"There! It moved again!"

"We surveyed this planet three months ago," Stellman said. "We found no intelligent beings, no dangerous animals, no poisonous plants, remember? All we found were woods and mountains and gold and lakes and emeralds and rivers and diamonds. If there were something here, wouldn't it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have attacked us long before?"

"I'm telling you I saw it move," Paxton insisted.

Herrera stood up. "This tree?" he asked Paxton.

"Yes. See, it doesn't even look like the others. Different texture —"

In a single synchronized movement, Herrera pulled a Mark II blaster from a side holster and fired three charges into the tree. The tree and all underbrush for ten yards around burst into flame and crumpled.

"All gone now," Herrera said.

Paxton rubbed his jaw. "I heard it scream when you shot it."

"Sure. But it's dead now," Herrera said soothingly. "If anything else moves, you just tell me, I shoot it. Now we find some more little emeralds, huh?"

Paxton and Stellman lifted their packs and followed Herrera up the trail. Stellman said in a low, amused voice, "Direct sort of fellow, isn't he?"

SLOWLY Drog returned to consciousness. The Mirash's flaming weapon had caught him in camouflage, almost completely unshielded. He still couldn't understand how it had happened. There had been no premonitory fear-scent, no snorting, no snarling, no warning whatsoever. The Mirash had attacked with blind suddenness, without waiting to see if he were friend or foe.

At last Drog understood the nature of the beast he was up against.

He waited until the hoofbeats of the three bull Mirash had faded into the distance. Then, painfully, he tried to extrude a visual receptor. Nothing happened. He had a moment of utter panic. If his central nervous system was damaged, this was the end.

He tried again. This time, a piece of rock slid off him, and he was able to reconstruct.

Quickly he performed an internal scansion. He sighed with relief. It had been a close thing. Instinctively he had quondicated at the flash moment and it had saved his life.

He tried to think of another course of action, but the shock of that sudden, vicious, unpremeditated assault had driven all Hunting Lore out of his mind. He found that he had absolutely no desire to encounter the savage Mirash again.

Suppose he returned without the stupid hide? He could tell the Patrol Leader that the Mirash were all females, and therefore unhuntable. A Young Scouter's word was honored, so no one would question him, or even check up.

But that would never do. How could he even consider it?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Well, he told himself gloomily, he could resign from the Scouters, put an end to the whole ridiculous business; the campfires, the singing, the games, the comradeship . . .

This would never do, Drog decided, taking himself firmly in hand. He was acting as though the Mirash were antagonists capable of planning against him. But the Mirash were not even intelligent beings. No creature without tentacles had ever developed true intelligence. That was Etlib's Law, and it had never been disputed.

In a battle between intelligence and instinctive cunning, intelligence always won. It had to. All he had to do was figure out how.

Drog began to track the Mirash again, following their odor. What colonial weapon should he use? A small atomic bomb? No, that would more than likely ruin the hide.

He stopped suddenly and laughed. It was really very simple, when one applied oneself. Why should he come into direct and dangerous contact with the Mirash? The time had come to use his brain, his understanding of animal psychology, his knowledge of Lures and Snares.

Instead of tracking the Mirash, he would go to their den.

And there he would set a trap.

THEIR temporary camp was in a cave, and by the time they arrived there it was sunset. Every crag and pinnacle of rock threw a precise and sharp-edged shadow. The ship lay five miles below them on the valley floor, its metallic hide glistening red and silver. In their packs were a dozen emeralds, small, but of an excellent color.

At an hour like this, Paxton thought of a small Ohio town, a soda fountain, a girl with bright hair. Herrera smiled to himself, contemplating certain gaudy ways of spending a million dollars before settling down to the serious business of ranching. And Stellman was already phrasing his Ph.D. thesis on extraterrestrial mineral deposits.

They were all in a pleasant, relaxed mood. Paxton had recovered completely from his earlier attack of nerves. Now he wished an alien monster *would* show up — a green one, by preference — chasing a lovely, scantily clad woman.

"Home again," Stellman said as they approached the entrance of the cave. "Want beef stew tonight?" It was his turn to cook.

"With onions," Paxton said, starting into the cave. He jumped back abruptly. "What's that?"

A few feet from the mouth of the cave was a small roast beef, still steaming hot, four large dia-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

monds, and a bottle of whiskey.

"That's odd," Stellman said. "And a trifle unnerving."

Paxton bent down to examine a diamond. Herrera pulled him back.

"Might be booby-trapped."

"There aren't any wires," Paxton said.

Herrera stared at the roast beef, the diamonds, the bottle of whiskey. He looked very unhappy.

"I don't trust this," he said.

"Maybe there *are* natives here," Stellman said. "Very timid ones. This might be their goodwill offering."

"Sure," Herrera said. "They sent to Terra for a bottle of Old Space Ranger just for us."

"What are we going to do?" Paxton asked.

"Stand clear," Herrera said. "Move 'way back." He broke off a long branch from a nearby tree and poked gingerly at the diamonds.

"Nothing's happening," Paxton said.

The long grass Herrera was standing on whipped tightly around his ankles. The ground beneath him surged, broke into a neat disc fifteen feet in diameter and, trailing root-ends, began to lift itself into the air. Herrera tried to jump free, but the grass held him like a thousand green tentacles.

"Hang on!" Paxton yelled idiotically, rushed forward and grabbed a corner of the rising disc of earth. It dipped steeply, stopped for a moment, and began to rise again. By then Herrera had his knife out, and was slashing the grass around his ankles. Stellman came unfrozen when he saw Paxton rising past his head.

Stellman seized him by the ankles, arresting the flight of the disc once more. Herrera wrenched one foot free and threw himself over the edge. The other ankle was held for a moment, then the tough grass parted under his weight. He dropped head-first to the ground, at the last moment ducking his head and landing on his shoulders. Paxton let go of the disc and fell, landing on Stellman's stomach.

The disc of earth, with its cargo of roast beef, whiskey and diamonds, continued to rise until it was out of sight.

The sun had set. Without speaking, the three men entered their cave, blasters drawn. They built a roaring fire at the mouth and moved back into the cave's interior.

"We'll guard in shifts tonight," Herrera said.

Paxton and Stellman nodded.

Herrera said, "I think you're right, Paxton. We've stayed here long enough."

"Too long," Paxton said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Herrera shrugged his shoulders. "As soon as it's light, we return to the ship and get out of here."

"If," Stellman said, "we are able to reach the ship."

DROG was quite discouraged. With a sinking heart he had watched the premature springing of his trap, the struggle, and the escape of the Mirash. It had been such a splendid Mirash, too. The biggest of the three!

He knew now what he had done wrong. In his eagerness, he had overbaited his trap. Just the minerals would have been sufficient, for Mirash were notoriously mineral-tropic. But no, he had to improve on pioneer methods, he had to use food stimuli as well. No wonder they had reacted suspiciously, with their senses so overburdened.

Now they were enraged, alert, and decidedly dangerous.

And a thoroughly aroused Mirash was one of the most fearsome sights in the Galaxy.

Drog felt very much alone as Elbonai's twin moons rose in the western sky. He could see the Mirash campfire blazing in the mouth of their cave. And by direct perception he could see the Mirash crouched within, every sense alert, weapons ready.

Was a Mirash hide really worth all this trouble?

Drog decided that he would much rather be floating at the five-thousand-foot level, sculpturing cloud formations and dreaming. He wanted to sop up radiation instead of eating nasty old solid food. And what use was all this hunting and trapping, anyhow? Worthless skills that his people had outgrown.

For a moment he almost had himself convinced. And then, in a flash of pure perception, he understood what it was all about.

True, the Elbonaians had outgrown their competition, developed past all danger of competition. But the Universe was wide, and capable of many surprises. Who could foresee what would come, what new dangers the race might have to face? And how could they meet them if the hunting instinct was lost?

No, the old ways had to be preserved, to serve as patterns; as reminders that peaceable, intelligent life was an unstable entity in an unfriendly Universe.

He was going to get that Mirash hide, or die trying!

The most important thing was to get them out of that cave. Now his hunting knowledge had returned to him.

Quickly, skillfully, he shaped a Mirash horn.

"DID YOU hear that?" Paxton asked.

"I thought I heard something,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stellman said, and they all listened intently.

The sound came again. It was voice crying, "Oh, help, help me!"

"It's a girl!" Paxton jumped to his feet.

"It *sounds* like a girl," Stellman said.

"Please, help me," the girl's voice wailed. "I can't hold out much longer. Is there anyone who can help me?"

Blood rushed to Paxton's face. In a flash he saw her, small, exquisite, standing beside her wrecked sports-spacer (what a fool-hardy trip it had been!) with monsters, green and slimy, closing in on her. And then *he* arrived, a foul alien beast.

Paxton picked up a spare blaster. "I'm going out there," he said coolly.

"Sit down, you moron!" Herrera ordered.

"But you heard her, didn't you?"

"That can't be a girl," Herrera said. "What would a girl be doing on this planet?"

"I'm going to find out," Paxton said, brandishing two blasters. "Maybe a spaceliner crashed, or she could have been out joyriding, and —"

"Siddown!" Herrera yelled.

"He's right," Stellman tried to reason with Paxton. "Even if a girl *is* out there, which I doubt, there's nothing we can do."

"Oh, help, help, it's coming after me!" the girl's voice screamed.

"Get out of my way," Paxton said, his voice low and dangerous.

"You're really going?" Herrera asked incredulously.

"Yes! Are you going to stop me?"

"Go ahead." Herrera gestured at the entrance of the cave.

"We can't let him!" Stellman gasped.

"Why not? His funeral," Herrera said lazily.

"Don't worry about me," Paxton said. "I'll be back in fifteen minutes — with her!" He turned on his heel and started toward the entrance. Herrera leaned forward and, with considerable precision, clubbed Paxton behind the ear with a stick of firewood. Stellman caught him as he fell.

They stretched Paxton out in the rear of the cave and returned to their vigil. The lady in distress moaned and pleaded for the next five hours. Much too long, as Paxton had to agree, even for a movie serial.

A GLOOMY, rain-splattered daybreak found Drog still camped a hundred yards from the cave. He saw the Mirash emerge in a tight group, weapons ready, eyes watching warily for any movement.

Why had the Mirash horn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

failed? The Scouter Manual said it was an infallible means of attracting the bull Mirash. But perhaps this wasn't mating season.

They were moving in the direction of a metallic ovoid which Drog recognized as a primitive spatial conveyance. It was crude, but once inside it the Mirash were safe from him.

He could simply trevest them, and that would end it. But it wouldn't be very humane. Above all, the ancient Elbonaians had been gentle and merciful, and a Young Scouter tried to be like them. Besides, trevestment wasn't a true pioneering method.

That left ilitrocy. It was the oldest trick in the book, and he'd have to get close to work it. But he had nothing to lose.

And luckily, climatic conditions were perfect for it.

IT STARTED as a thin ground-mist. But, as the watery sun climbed the gray sky, fog began forming.

Herrera cursed angrily as it grew more dense. "Keep close together now. Of all the luck!"

Soon they were walking with their hands on each others' shoulders, blasters ready, peering into the impenetrable fog.

"Herrera?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you sure we're going in the right direction?"

"Sure. I took a compass course before the fog closed in."

"Suppose your compass is off?"

"Don't even think about it."

They walked on, picking their way carefully over the rock-strewn ground.

"I think I see the ship," Paxton said.

"No, not yet," Herrera said.

Stellman stumbled over a rock, dropped his blaster, picked it up again and fumbled around for Herrera's shoulder. He found it and walked on.

"I think we're almost there," Herrera said.

"I sure hope so," Paxton said. "I've had enough."

"Think your girl friend's waiting for you at the ship?"

"Don't rub it in."

"Okay," Herrera said. "Hey, Stellman, you better grab hold of my shoulder again. No sense getting separated."

"I am holding your shoulder," Stellman said.

"You're not."

"I am, I tell you!"

"Look, I guess I know if someone's holding my shoulder or not."

"Am I holding your shoulder, Paxton?"

"No," Paxton said.

"That's bad," Stellman said, very slowly. "That's bad, indeed."

"Why?"

"Because I'm definitely holding *someone's* shoulder."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Herrera yelled, "Get down, get down quick, give me room to shoot!" But it was too late. A sweet-sour odor was in the air. Stellman and Paxton smelled it and collapsed. Herrera ran forward blindly, trying to hold his breath. He stumbled and fell over a rock, tried to get back on his feet —

And everything went black.

The fog lifted suddenly and Drog was standing alone, smiling triumphantly. He pulled out a long-bladed skinning knife and bent over the nearest Mirash.

THE spaceship hurtled toward Terra at a velocity which threatened momentarily to burn out the overdrive. Herrera, hunched over the controls, finally regained his self-control and cut the speed down to normal. His usually tan face was still ashen, and his hands shook on the instruments.

Stellman came in from the bunkroom and flopped wearily in the co-pilot's seat.

"How's Paxton?" Herrera asked.

"I dosed him with Drona-3," Stellman said. "He's going to be all right."

"He's a good kid," Herrera said.

"It's just shock, for the most part," Stellman said. "When he comes to, I'm going to put him to work counting diamonds. Counting diamonds is the best of therapies, I understand."

Herrera grinned, and his face began to regain its normal color. "I feel like doing a little diamond-counting myself, now that it's all turned out okay." Then his long face became serious. "But I ask you, Stellman, who could figure it? I still don't understand!"

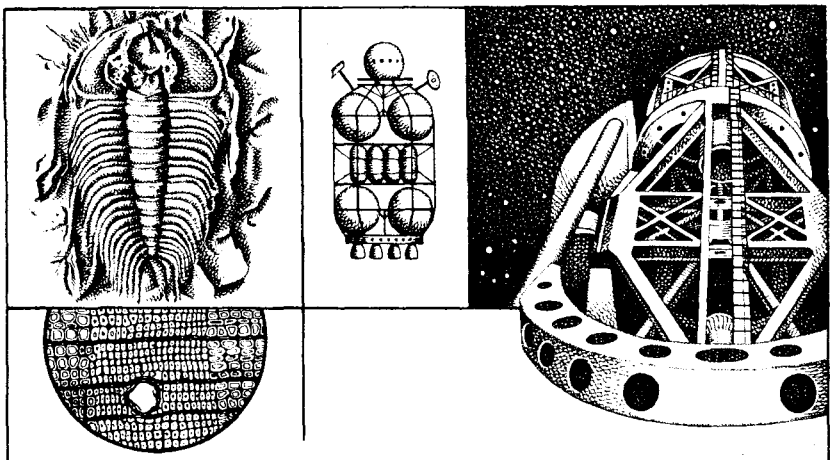
THE Scouter Jamboree was a glorious spectacle. The Soaring Falcon Patrol, number 22, gave a short pantomime showing the clearing of the land on Elbonai. The Brave Bisons, number 31, were in full pioneer dress.

And at the head of Patrol 19, the Charging Mirash Patrol, was Drog, a first-class Scouter now, wearing a glittering achievement badge. He was carrying the Patrol flag — the position of honor — and everyone cheered to see it.

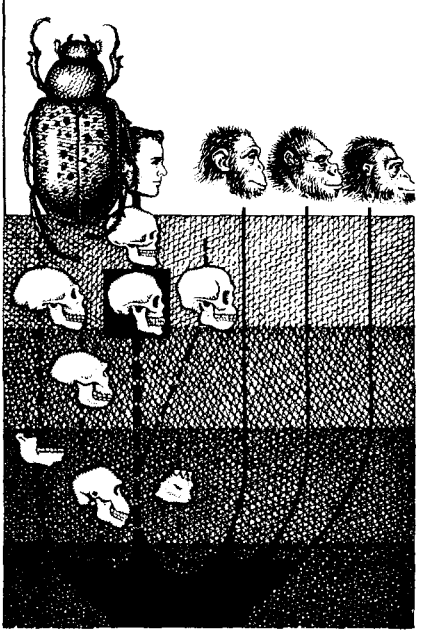
Because waving proudly from the flagpole was the firm, fine-textured, characteristic skin of an adult Mirash, its zippers, tubes, gauges, buttons and holsters flashing merrily in the sunshine.

—ROBERT SHECKLEY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



for your information



By WILLY LEY

UNVEILING THE MYSTERY PLANET

NAME THE planet which most closely resembles Earth in size. The answer, of course, is Venus. From direct measurements, its diameter works out to 7700 miles, while that of Earth is 7900 miles. But note, please, that these 7700 miles include the cloud layer or layers of Venus, so the planet proper must be somewhat smaller. And don't ask by how much — it isn't very polite to ask questions to which the answer is not known.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now name the planet that comes closest to Earth of all full-fledged planets — which means discounting a few planetoids like Hermes, Albert, Icarus, etc., and naturally our own moon, too. The answer is again Venus. When both Earth and Venus are on the same side of their orbits, the distance between them amounts to about 26 million miles, which is a good 9 million miles closer than our neighbor on the other side, Mars, can ever manage. And even this is not the best Venus can do. On December 6, 1882, during a so-called transit — the transits will be discussed later — the distance was only 24,600,000 miles.

Now name the planet with the most nearly circular orbit. Venus, of course. Now the one which is the most nearly perfect sphere. Again Venus. And now name the planet about which least is known. The answer, disappointingly, is still Venus.

THOUGH Venus can come closer than any other planet, we know as little about it as we know about Pluto, the planet which is farthest away. In fact, what we do know well (and reliably) is the same in both cases. We know their orbits.

That of Venus, as has been said, is very nearly circular. The differences in the distance of the closest approach between Venus and Earth are mostly caused by the fact that the orbit of Earth is somewhat eccentric; Earth is closest to the Sun in January. As for Venus, the average distance from the Sun is 67,200,000 miles, and the planet, moving with an average orbital velocity of 21.7 miles per second — that of Earth is 18.5 miles per second — needs 224.7 days to go around the Sun once.

If the plane of the orbit of Venus coincided with that of Earth, which is the ecliptic, we would see the planet moving across the disk of the Sun every time Venus comes closest to us, overtaking the slower Earth in the permanent race around the Sun. But the plane of the orbit of Venus does *not* coincide with the plane of the orbit of Earth. There is a considerable tilt, amounting to 3 degrees, 23 minutes and 38 seconds of arc.

This is a stronger tilt than that of any other major planet, excepting only Mercury (with 7° 0' 12") and Pluto (with 17° 8' 38"). Because of it, Venus, as a rule, does not pass between us and the Sun, but is, as seen from Earth, "above" or "below" the Sun. Only rarely does it happen that the two planets pass each other in sections of their orbit which are situated in such a manner that a line from the center of the Sun

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the centers of both planets would be a straight line, or very nearly so.

When that happens, we get a "transit." Venus, which mostly is the brightest planet in the sky, then moves across the Sun's disk as a black spot. The spacing of these transits in time is such that a man might either observe two of them within his lifetime or not live long enough to see even one. The generation born early in the present century will not live to see one, while the generation now being born will see two.

It works like this: supposing a Venus transit is due in the year X, the next transit will take place in X + 8. But the next one after that will not happen until 121½ years later. Then there is again an interval of only 8 years, but if somebody just happened to miss them, he would have to wait for 105½ years for his next opportunity. The cycle, then, runs 8, 121½, 8, 105½, 8, 121½ and so forth.

Actual years of Venus transits were 1761, 1769, 1874 and 1882, with the next two scheduled for 2004 and 2012.

BY 2004, a Venus transit will assuredly have lost most of its former importance, but in the past a transit was something that every astronomer was eager to observe — expeditions were sent halfway around the globe in order to obtain observations from as many points as possible. The main reason was what had first been pointed out by the Astronomer Royal Dr. Edmond Halley; namely, that the precise time required by Venus to cross the Sun's disk could be used to calculate the distance from the Earth to the Sun, something that was not yet established then.

In the course of these transit observations, it was found that Venus has an atmosphere. While Venus is crossing the Sun's disk, it appears simply as a round black spot, but while entering and leaving, the round dark spot is surrounded by a luminous ring, caused by the bending of the Sun's rays by the atmosphere.

It is one of the "believe-it-or-nots" of the history of science that the first two reports on this phenomenon were casually forgotten.

The first to see it and to draw the proper conclusions (and to write them up, which is important, too) was Mikhail Vasilyevitch Lomonósov, who observed it from his home in St. Petersburg, Russia, during the transit of May 26, 1761. Though his discovery was discussed with much animation at the Imperial Academy of Science, nobody outside Russia learned about this fact until another Russian scientist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

published a book about Lomonósov in Germany in 1910!

During the next transit of 1769, David Rittenhouse of Philadelphia made the same discovery. His report was also mislaid for more than a century and when it was again seen during the transit of 1874, it was considered a great novelty!

After the next transit, that of 1882, it was established that the same phenomenon can sometimes be observed even when Venus is not in transit. As has been said before, Venus normally is "above" or "below" the Sun when the planet passes Earth. But on these occasions, Venus may be quite "near" the Sun along the line of sight and then one can spot the planet in the daylight sky as a very thin ring of light.

Unfortunately, this phenomenon only tells us that Venus has an atmosphere. It does not tell us how deep it is. The true diameter of Venus, therefore, is still unknown. Nor do we know the mass of Venus. The books usually state that the mass of Venus is 80% of the mass of Earth and the surface gravity of the planet is also given as that of Earth minus 20 per cent. Well, it probably is near that value, but we can't be completely certain.

If Venus had a moon, the mass of the planet could be derived very readily from the time needed by that moon to swing around its primary. Since Venus is moonless, though, its mass has to be derived from its influence on the neighboring planets; you get the nice paradox that an astronomer may check on the movement of Mars with the utmost care *in order to find out how much Venus weighs!*

But since Mars is also pulled by Earth in one direction and by Jupiter in another, with Saturn exerting some influence, too, the final result has to be somewhat uncertain, although the masses of Earth, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are well known because all of them do have moons.

THAT VENUS might have a moon was believed for quite some time and, as late as 1870, the British astronomer Richard A. Proctor (in his book *Other Worlds Than Ours*) did not yet dare to say that the older observations of a moon of Venus had been mistakes. His attitude was more or less that there was so much historical evidence for a moon of Venus that its existence had to be accepted with some reservations even though it had not been seen recently.

The first to proclaim that Venus had a moon had been the Neapolitan astronomer Francesco Fontana in 1645. His report made

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his famous contemporary Jean Dominique Cassini watch for it. Cassini thought he saw it in 1666 and in 1672 he felt sure and published his observation.

But a long time went by until somebody else went on record as having observed the moon of the evening star. In 1740, the English astronomer Short announced his seeing it, whereupon Mayer in Greifswald in Germany started looking and succeeded in 1759. In 1761, Montaigne in Limoges, France, and Rödkier of Copenhagen corroborated the findings of Mayer and in 1764 Horrebow in Copenhagen and Montbarron in Auxerre, France, corroborated Rödkier and Montaigne.

To everybody's chagrin, that moon had failed to show up during the actual transit in 1761. Efforts to spot it were quadrupled during the transit of 1769, but except for one doubtful assertion, the evidence proved negative.

This failure had been predicted by Father Maximilian Hell, S. J., of Vienna in 1766. Father Hell — fortunately for his calling, the word *hell* merely means "bright" or "luminous" in German — had said that the moon of Venus was merely an optical illusion. The bright image of the planet is reflected back into the telescope from the cornea of the observer's eye and then "seen" as a smaller image of the same phase near the main image.

Still, people kept looking and the two transits of 1874 and 1882 were again checked for signs of a satellite of Venus. The result was negative and a Belgian astronomer, P. Stroobant, set himself the task of finding out what the various observers had seen, if they had seen anything other than Father Hell's secondary image. And he discovered that whenever the moon of Venus had been reported, the planet had been near a small fixed star, one just bright enough to be seen without a telescope as a faint star. In the telescope, it would be rather bright, though, of course, just a pinpoint of light.

The stars that had doubled for a moon of Venus were found to have been *64 Orionis, 71 Orionis* and *mu Tauri.*

WITH AN object like Venus which becomes invisible — meaning that all we can see is the night side — just when closest to us, one has to be grateful for any definite bit of information. The discovery of the atmosphere by Lomonósov, Rittenhouse and Schroeter was one of these definite bits. The final disproof of the existence of a moon by Stroobant was another one.

A third one has been added just recently, more than half a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

century later, by Gerard P. Kuiper of Yerkes and McDonald Observatories, who at long last succeeded in establishing the position of the axis of Venus. The inclination of the equator of Venus to the plane of its orbit turned out to be 32 degrees, with a possible error of 2 degrees either way. The axis of Venus points in the direction of the constellation of Cepheus.

The question of the position of the axis of Venus and the closely connected problem of the rotation of Venus and the length of its day both have quite a stormy history.

It must first be stated that the blinding white disk of cloud-veiled Venus is virtually featureless. The area over the poles, especially over the south pole, looks somewhat brighter on occasion, while faint and large spots seem to be located in the equatorial regions. But none is sharply defined and, in any drawing, the contrasts have to be exaggerated many times in order to be "drawable" at all. Now of course it is the surface markings of a planet from which you derive its period of rotation and the position of the equator and of the poles.

The story of the surface markings begins with Jean Dominique Cassini, who felt certain that Venus turned on its axis at very nearly the same rate as Earth. The figure he gave in 1666 was 23 hours and 15 minutes.

Some eighty years later, Francesco Bianchini, one of the members of Pope Clemens XI's commission for calendar reform, declared that Cassini had been mistaken. It took much longer than a day; in fact, it took 24 days and 8 hours.

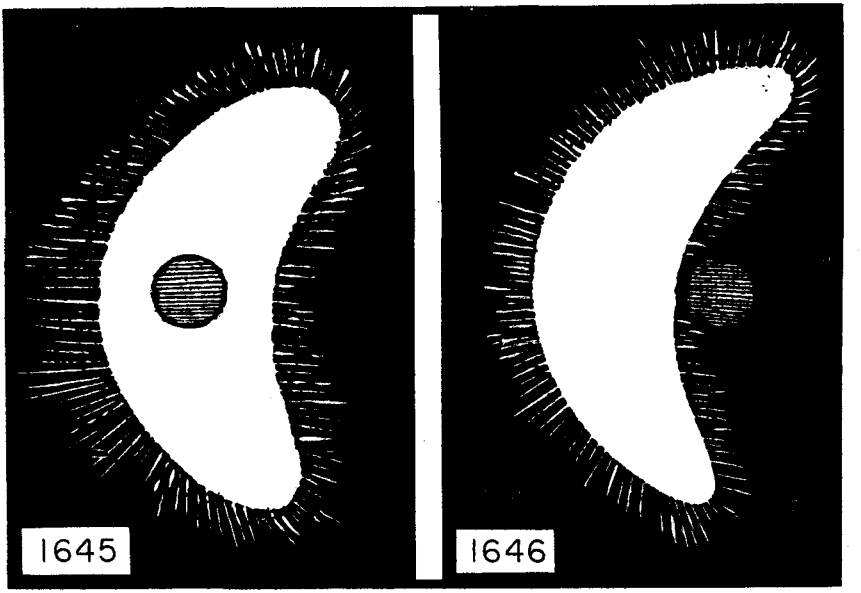
Several decades later, a team of German astronomers said that it was Bianchini who was wrong and that Cassini had been right or very nearly so. The length of the day on Venus was precisely 23 hours, 21 minutes and 8 seconds.

This was slightly revised in about 1841 by the Père de Vico, who thought he could prove a diurnal period of 23 hours, 21 minutes and 22 seconds.

OBVIOUSLY, if the period of rotation of Venus were something like 23½ hours, the position of the markings, observed on successive evenings, should be about the same, since both Earth and Venus would have completed a full rotation in the interim.

But then came Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli, discoverer of the Martian "canals" and diligent observer of Venus, who said that you would find the markings in the same positions if the planet had not rotated at all in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Earliest telescopic drawings of Venus, made by Francesco Fontana in 1645 and 1646

meantime. Schiaparelli felt certain that both Mercury and Venus behaved with respect to the Sun as our moon behaves with respect to Earth, that they always face the Sun with the same hemisphere — in other words, that they performed one rotation per revolution around the Sun.

As regards Mercury, Schiaparelli's opinion has been fully accepted by everybody. With respect to Venus, it had to be rejected, for the observed facts do not fit the theory and the observed fact here is one of the few things we actually and definitely do know about Venus — the existence of the atmosphere.

Let us try to imagine what would happen if Schiaparelli were right. More specifically, let us imagine what would happen if the rotation of Venus were stopped right now so that the sunlight would always fall on the same hemisphere — sunlight, incidentally, which is about twice as powerful as that received by Earth.

The heated air would rise and flow across the terminator to the dark side. There it would cool

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

off, shed what moisture it may have contained and return to the daylight side, picking up more moisture for the return trip to the night side. After a relatively short time, as time is measured by astronomers and geologists, all the water on the planet would be deposited, frozen, on the night side, which grows colder and colder as time goes on.

Since the planet is nearly Earth size, the area of the night side would be large and, in its center, a cold pole would develop which is no longer warmed by the air coming over from the daylight side.

In time, the area of the cold pole would be cold enough so that the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere does not return to the daylight side. The atmosphere would grow thinner, too; it is heated enough for a portion to be lost into space because a number of the molecules would certainly acquire escape velocity or better.

With less air to transport heat to the night side, the night side cools off even more rapidly and grows cold enough to freeze the gases.

In the end, all the moisture and a portion of the atmosphere would be frozen on the night side, while another portion of the atmosphere would have been lost in space.

ALL THIS, of course, would have happened many million years ago, so that Venus now should be an atmosphereless planet.

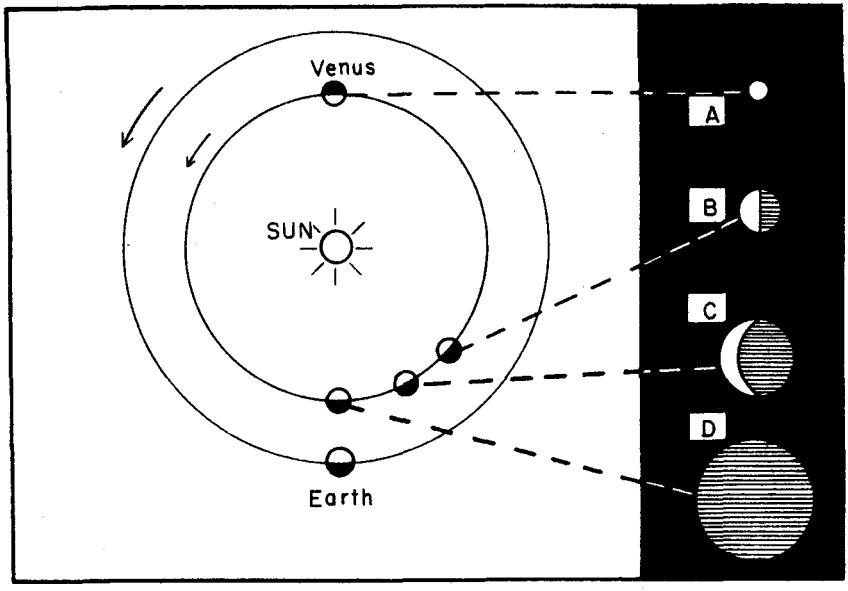
I might add that conditions on Mercury do not have to be precisely the same as just described for a hypothetical Venus. Mercury is much smaller than Venus, which means that its escape velocity is less and, being closer to the Sun, it is heated up more. Any atmosphere which Mercury might have had was probably lost in space, and what moisture there was might well be frozen on the night side.

In the case of Mercury, this might have taken much longer because it has a rather wide "twilight belt" because of its very eccentric orbit. Venus, running along a nearly circular orbit, cannot have a twilight belt of any width.

So we are sure that Schiaparelli was wrong with respect to Venus. The planet must have a diurnal rotation but the question of what it is is still unsolved.

If, for example, Cassini had been right, we could now detect this rotation by the Doppler effect. But the Doppler effect does not give any reading, which means that the rotation must be slower than that of Earth, longer, say, than 100 hours. On the other hand, it cannot be very much

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Orbits of Venus and Earth and Venus' appearance in various positions. When showing phase C, Venus has maximum brightness

more than 100 hours because, if it were, the temperature of the upper layers of the atmosphere should be quite different on the daylight and on the night side.

But what differences have been measured are not very large — and somewhat uncertain, too. From what we now know, which is admittedly not enough, the period of rotation of Venus seems to be in the vicinity of 20 days.

Now for the markings.

They are, as has been mentioned, quite faint and indistinct and consist mainly in the fact that the polar regions look somewhat brighter than the equatorial areas. Bianchini, after many observations, came to the conclusion that there were a number of interconnected equatorial seas which he named *Mare Galilei, Mare Columbi, Mare Vespucci* and so forth.

The German Schroeter centered his attention on the polar areas and announced that he had caught glimpses of an enormous mountain near the south pole, a mountain that had to be about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

45 miles high. Since no mountain of such a height is possible — its own weight would cause it to "settle" — Schroeter was probably deceived by an isolated high cloud.

IN 1891, just after Schiaparelli had published his conclusions about the rotation of Venus, the astronomer Niesten, who did not agree with him at all, published a map of Venus (Fig. 3) which has remained the only one of its kind after Bianchini's.

Some seven or eight years later, W. Villiger, an astronomer in Munich, took a few rubber balls, dipped them in flat white paint and made a few spheres of plaster of Paris. Then he placed them at such a distance that, when observed through a small telescope, they would show the same angular diameter as Venus does in a larger telescope. And he illuminated them in the manner in which Venus is illuminated by the Sun. After that, he had some graduate students make drawings of them and also produced a few of his own. The featureless white spheres looked much brighter around their "poles" and acquired some vaguely elliptical grayish areas near their middle.

It was quite evident then that no astronomer had ever succeeded in seeing the surface of Venus. Even though definite indentations in the terminator have been seen, such irregularities in the cloud layer did not open a vista of the surface.

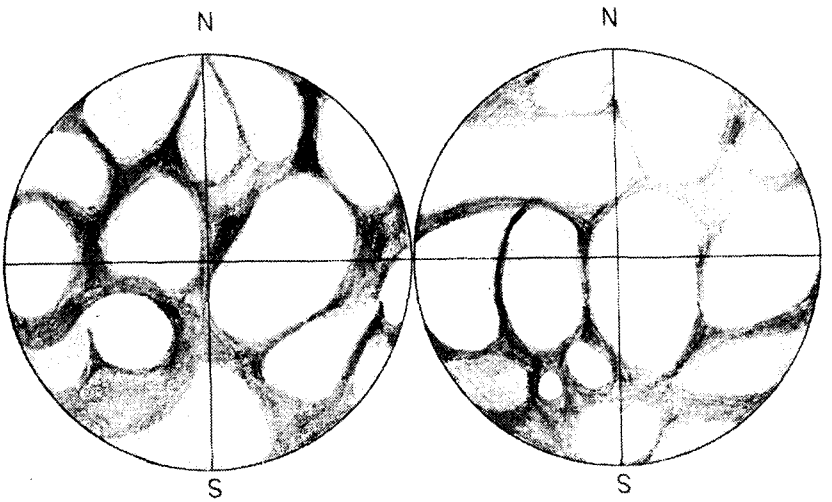
I said on one occasion in the past that Venus seems to be at least triple-veiled, for every overcast develops a hole once in a while, and even in a double overcast the holes should occasionally match. With a triple layer of clouds, the probability of the matching of holes — which are evidently rare events to begin with — becomes invisibly small. In short, the clouds of Venus are, as one writer phrased it, as opaque as marshmallows.

But what are they? For many years, they were taken to be water vapor without question and, at the beginning of this century, the surface of Venus was universally considered "dripping wet." If there was a difference in opinion, it was merely about the degree of wetness. When asked, most astronomers would haul a book on geology off the shelf, point at a picture depicting a carboniferous forest and say, "This is how it must look."

Only a few considered the possibility that Venus was a *panthalassa,* meaning that it was covered by a shoreless ocean without any considerable land masses at all, or possibly just a few islands.

The view of a dripping wet

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Map of Venus, drawn in 1891 by Niesten

Venus was still held by as important a scientist as Svante Arrhenius in 1918.

JUST one decade later, opinion had completely reversed itself, largely as the result of a long series of pictures taken by F. E. Ross at Mt. Wilson Observatory in 1927. The new view was that Venus was completely dry, that violent storms picked up dust from the endless desert, forming a dust-cloud layer beneath the other cloud layers.

One of the results of this work was that, while the markings seen with the telescope might be optical illusions, there were markings that could be photographed, provided you photographed them in violet and ultra-violet, for they do not show up in light of the wave-lengths the eye can see best. (Dr. Kuiper's determination of the position of Venus' axis is also based on such photographs.) The reason for postulating absolute dryness was that neither water nor oxygen could be detected spectroscopically, but that another set of lines showed up well which was then identified as belonging to carbon dioxide.

But negative evidence is often insufficient grounds for building conclusions. The statement that neither water nor oxygen has been found in the atmosphere of Venus should really read that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neither water nor oxygen *has been found above the clouds*. And one can easily explain why there couldn't be any above the clouds.

The spectroscope can only detect water vapor, not water, and the highest clouds of Venus must be quite high up. If, for the sake of discussion, we compare the atmosphere of Venus with that of Earth, the clouds might be 10 miles from the surface, but in the terrestrial atmosphere, the temperature ten miles up is *minus* 67° Fahrenheit. Any water at ten miles would be in the form of ice crystals, so the clouds themselves would be ice crystals. And ice crystals do not show up in the spectroscope.

Likewise, any oxygen present would be past the stage of oxygen molecules, but would be single oxygen atoms because of the powerful solar radiation. I don't know where the bands caused by oxygen atoms would be in a spectrogram, but certainly not in or near the place where one looks for the bands of oxygen — that is to say, oxygen molecules.

SO, WHILE the picture of the bone-dry planet fits what observations there are, it is not necessarily the truth. In fact, Donald H. Menzel and Fred L. Whipple of Harvard Observatory have shown recently that the existing observations would also fit a *panthalassa*, incidentally one where the oceans consist of carbonated water — seltzer!

In short, Venus is either completely dry or completely wet. But can we ever find out which it is? Probably not until a new factor enters into the picture — space travel.

Just to observe from outside our own atmosphere would be an incredible boon to astronomers; the constitution of the atmosphere of Venus above its highest cloud layer could indubitably be established from the space station. The precise mass of Venus could be established by means of a slightly more elaborate experiment. One could fire a missile from the space station in such a manner that its path would be bent by the gravitational field of Venus. Careful observation of the path of this missile would settle the problem once and for all.

But to learn what is below the cloud layer, we would have to go a bit closer. A method that comes to mind without much deliberation is to fire sampling missiles into the atmosphere of Venus from a nearby ship. In the end, it might be possible to lower a reporting missile all the way to the ground.

And then we'll *know*.

— WILLY LEY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By RICHARD MATHESON

One for the books

When he woke up that morning a weird thing had happened . . . he could speak fluent French!

WHEN he woke up that morning, he could talk French.

There was no warning. At six-fifteen, the alarm went off as usual and he and his wife stirred. Fred reached out a sleep-deadened hand and shut off the bell. The room was still for a moment.

Then Eva pushed back the covers on her side and he pushed back the covers on his side. His vein-gnarled legs dropped over the side of the bed. He said, "*Bon matin,* Eva."

There was a slight pause.

"Wha'?" she asked.

"*Je dis bon matin,*" he said.

There was a rustle of nightgown as she twisted around to squint at him. "*What'd* you say?"

"All I said was good—"

Fred Elderman stared back at his wife.

"What *did* I say?" he asked in a whisper.

"You said "*bone mattin* or—"

"*Je dis bon matin. C'est un bon matin, n'est ce pas?*"

The sound of his hand being clapped across his mouth was like that of a fast ball thumping in a catcher's mitt. Above the knuckle-ridged gag, his eyes were shocked.

"Fred, what IS it?"

SLOWLY, the hand drew down from his lips.

"I dunno, Eva," he said, awed.

Illustrated by DICK FRANCIS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Unconsciously, the hand reached up, one finger of it rubbing at his hair-ringed bald spot. "It sounds like some—some kind of foreign talk."

"But you don't know no foreign talk, Fred," she told him.

"That's just it."

They sat there looking at each other blankly. Fred glanced over at the clock.

"We better get dressed," he said.

While he was in the bathroom, she heard him singing, "*Elle fit un fromage, du lait du ses mouton, ron, ron, du lait du ses mouton,*" but she didn't dare call it to his attention while he was shaving.

Over breakfast coffee, he muttered something.

"What?" she asked before she could stop herself.

"*Je dis que vous dire ceci?*"

He heard the coffee go down her gulping throat.

"I mean," he said, looking dazed, "what does this mean?"

"Yes, what *does* it? You never talked no foreign language before."

"I *know* it," he said, toast suspended halfway to his open mouth. "What—what kind of language is it?"

"S-sounds t'me like French."

"*French?* I don't know no French."

She swallowed more coffee. "You do now," she said weakly.

He stared at the table cloth.

"*Le diable s'en mêle,*" he muttered.

Her voice rose. "Fred, *what?*"

His eyes were confused. "I said the devil has something to do with it."

"Fred, you're—"

She straightened up in the chair and took a deep breath. "Now," she said, "let's not profane, Fred. There has to be a good reason for this." No reply. "Well, *doesn't* there, Fred?"

"Sure, Eva. *Sure.* But—"

"No buts about it," she declared, plunging ahead as if she were afraid to stop. "Now is there any reason in this world why you should know how to talk French—" she snapped her thin fingers—"just like that?"

He shook his head vaguely.

"Well," she went on, wondering what to say next, "let's see then." They looked at each other in silence. "Say something," she decided. "Let's—" She groped for words. "Let's see what we . . . have here." Her voice died off.

"Say somethin'?"

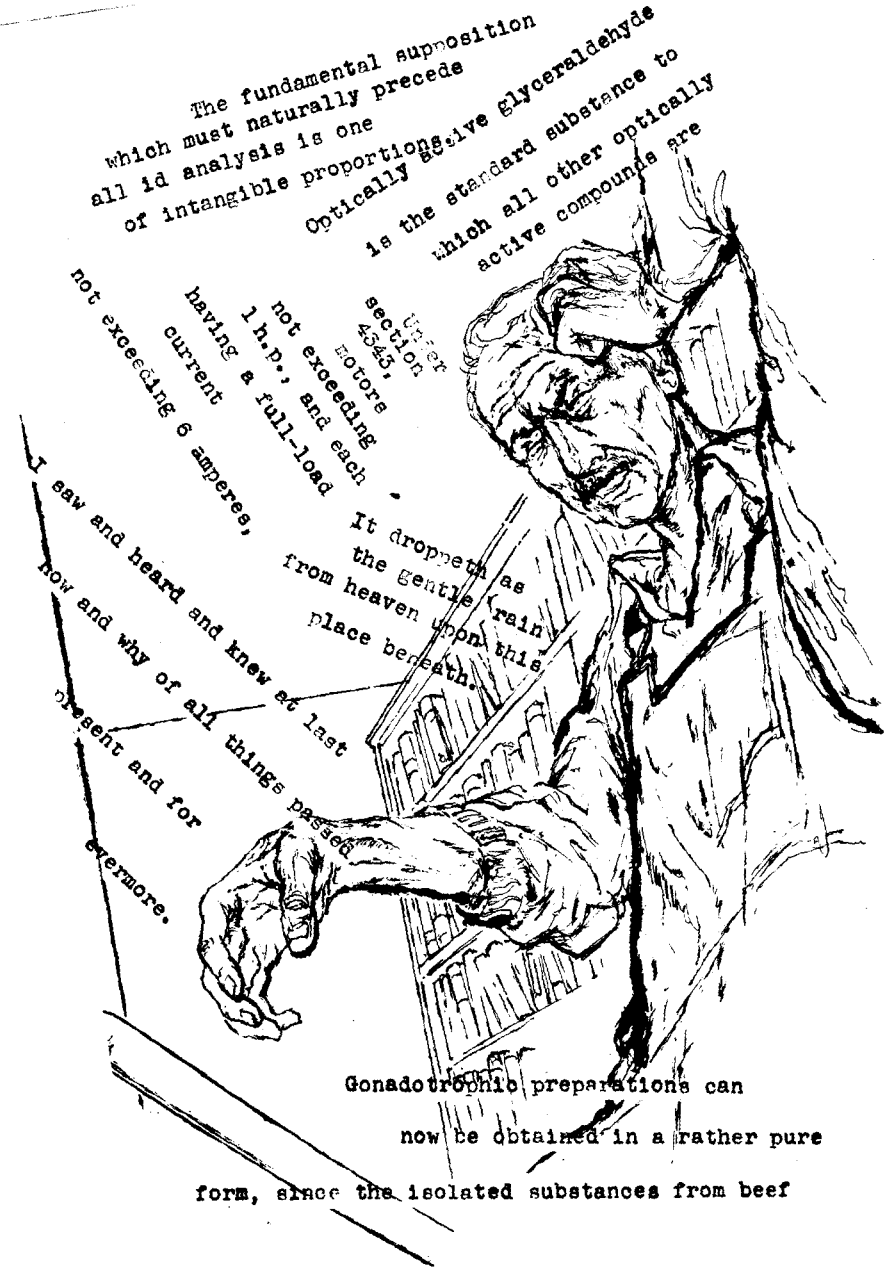
"Yes," she said. "Go on."

"*Un gémissement se fit entendre. Les dogues se mettent à aboyer. Ces gens me vont bien. Il va sur les quinze ans—*"

"Fred?"

"*Il fit fabriquer une exacte représentation du monstre.*"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Fred, hold on!" she cried, looking scared.

His voice broke off and he looked at her, blinking.

"What . . . what did you say this time, Fred?" she asked.

"I said—a moan was heard. His mastiffs began to bark. These gloves fit me. He will soon be fifteen years old and—"

"What?"

"And he had an exact copy of the monster made. *Sans même l'entamer.*"

"*Fred?*"

He looked ill. "Without even scratchin'," he said.

AT that hour of the morning, the campus was quiet. The only classes that early were the two seven-thirty Economics lectures and they were held on the White Campus. Here on the Red there was no sound. In an hour, the walks would be filled with chatting, laughing, loafer-clicking student hordes, but for now there was peace.

In far less than peace, Fred Elderman shuffled along the east side of the campus, headed for the administration building. Having left a confused Eva at home, he'd been trying to figure it out as he went to work.

What was it? When had it begun? *C'est une heure,* said his mind.

He shook his head angrily. This was terrible. He tried desperately to think of what could have happened, but he couldn't. It just didn't make sense. He was 59, a janitor at the university with no education to speak of, living a quiet, ordinary life. Then he woke up one morning speaking articulate French.

French.

He stopped a moment and stood in the frosty October wind, staring at the cupola of Jeramy Hall. He'd cleaned out the French office the night before. Could that have anything to do with—

No, that was ridiculous. He started off again, muttering under his breath—unconsciously. "*Je suis, tu es, il est, elle est, nous sommes, vous êtes—*"

At eight-ten, he entered the History Department office to repair a sink in the washroom. He worked on it for an hour and seven minutes, then put the tools back in the bag and walked out into the office.

"Mornin'," he said to the professor sitting at a desk.

"Good morning, Fred," said the professor.

Fred Elderman walked out into the hall thinking how remarkable it was that the income of Louis XVI, from the same type of taxes, exceeded those of Louis XV by 130 million livre and that the exports which had been 106

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

million in 1720 were 192 million in 1746 and—

He stopped in the hall, a stunned look on his lean face.

That morning, he had occasion to be in the offices of the Physics, the Chemistry, the English and the Art Departments.

THE WINDMILL was a little tavern near Main Street. Fred went there Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings to nurse a couple of draught beers and chat with his two friends—Harry Bullard, manager of Hogan's Bowling Alleys, and Lou Peacock, postal worker and amateur gardener.

Stepping into the doorway of the dimlit saloon that evening, Fred was heard—by an exiting patron—to murmur, "*Je connais tous ces brave gens,*" then look around with a guilty twitch of cheek. "I mean . . ." he muttered, but didn't finish.

Harry Bullard saw him first in the mirror. Twisting his head around on its fat column of neck, he said, "C'mon in, Fred, the whiskey's fine," then, to the bartender, "Draw one fer the elder man," and chuckled.

Fred walked to the bar with the first smile he'd managed to summon that day. Peacock and Bullard greeted him and the bartender set down a brimming stein.

"What's new, Fred?" Harry asked.

Fred pressed his mustache between two foam-removing fingers.

"Not much," he said, still too uncertain to discuss it. Dinner with Eva had been a painful meal during which he'd eaten not only food but an endless and detailed running commentary on the Thirty Years War, the Magna Charta and boudoir information about Catherine the Great. He had been glad to retire from the house at seven-thirty, murmuring an unmanageable, "*Bon nuit, ma chere.*"

"What's new with you?" he asked Harry Bullard now.

"Well," Harry answered, "we been paintin' down at the alleys. You know, redecoratin'."

"That right?" Fred said. "When painting with colored beeswax was inconvenient, Greek and Roman easel painters used *tempera*—that is, colors fixed upon a wood or stucco base by means of such a medium as—"

He stopped. There was a bulging silence.

"Harh?" Harry Bullard asked.

Fred swallowed nervously. "Nothing," he said hastily. "I was just—" He stared down into the tan depths of his beer. "Nothing," he repeated.

Bullard glanced at Peacock, who shrugged back.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How are your hothouse flowers coming, Lou?" Fred inquired, to change the subject.

The small man nodded. "Fine. They're just fine."

"Good," said Fred, nodding, too. "*Vi sono pui di cinquante bastimenti in porto.*" He gritted his teeth and closed his eyes.

"What's that?" Lou asked, cupping one ear.

Fred coughed on his hastily swallowed beer. "Nothing," he said.

"No, what did ya say?" Harry persisted, the half-smile on his broad face indicating that he was ready to hear a good joke.

"I—I said there are more than fifty ships in the harbor," explained Fred morosely.

The smile faded. Harry looked blank.

"What harbor?" he asked.

Fred tried to sound casual. "I—it's just a joke I heard today. But I forget the last line."

"Oh." Harry stared at Fred, then returned to his drink. "Yeah."

They were quiet a moment. Then Lou asked Fred, "Through for the day?"

"No. I have to clean up the Math office later."

Lou nodded. "That's too bad."

FRED squeezed more foam from his mustache. "Tell me something," he said, taking the plunge impulsively. "What would you think if you woke up one morning talking French?"

"Who did that?" asked Harry, squinting.

"Nobody," Fred said hurriedly. "Just . . . *supposing,* I mean. Supposing a man was to—well, to *know* things he never learned. You know what I mean? Just *know* them. As if they were always in his mind and he was seeing them for the first time."

"What kind o' things, Fred?" asked Lou.

"Oh . . . history. Different . . . languages. Things about . . . books and painting and . . . and atoms and — chemicals." His shrug was jerky and obvious. "Things like that."

"Don't get ya, buddy," Harry said, having given up any hopes that a joke was forthcoming.

"You mean he knows things he never learned?" Lou asked. "That it?"

There was something in both their voices—a doubting incredulity, a holding back, as if they feared to commit themselves, a suspicious reticence.

Fred sloughed it off. "I was just supposing. Forget it. It's not worth talking about."

He had only one beer that night, leaving early with the excuse that he had to clean the Mathematics office. And, all through the silent minutes that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he swept and mopped and dusted, he kept trying to figure out what was happening to him.

He walked home in the chill of night to find Eva waiting for him in the kitchen.

"Coffee, Fred?" she offered.

"I'd like that," he said, nodding. She started to get up. "No, *s'accomadi, la prego,*" he blurted.

She looked at him, grim-faced.

"I mean," he translated, "sit down, Eva. I can get it."

They sat there drinking coffee while he told her about his experiences.

"It's more than I can figure, Eva," he said. "It's . . . scary, in a way. I know so many things I never knew. I have no idea where they come from. Not the least idea." His lips pressed together. "But I *know* them," he said, "I certainly know them."

"More than just . . . French now?" she asked.

HE shook his head worriedly. "Lots more." he said. "Like —" He looked up from his cup. "Listen to this. Main progress in producing fast particles has been made by using relatively small voltages and repeated acceleration. In most of the instruments used, charged particles are driven around in circular or spiral orbits with the help of a— You listenin', Eva?"

He saw her adam's apple move.

"I'm listenin'," she said.

"—help of a magnetic field. The acceleration can be applied in different ways. In the so-called betatron of Kerst and Serber—"

"What does it *mean,* Fred?" she interrupted.

"I don't know," he said helplessly. "It's . . . just words in my head. I know what it means when I say something in a foreign tongue, but . . . this?"

She shivered, clasping at her forearms abruptly.

"It's not right," she said.

He frowned at her in silence for a long moment.

"What do you mean, Eva?" he asked then.

"I don't know, Fred," she said quietly and shook her head once, slowly. "I just don't know."

She woke up about midnight and heard him mumbling in his sleep.

"The natural logarithms of whole numbers from ten to two hundred. Number one—zero—two point three oh two six. *One* —two point three nine seven nine. *Two*—two point—"

"Fred, go t'sleep," she said, frowning nervously.

"—four eight four nine."

She prodded him with an elbow. "Go t'*sleep,* Fred."

"*Three*-two point—"

"Fred!"

"Huh?" He moaned and swallowed dryly, turned on his side.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the darkness, she heard him shape the pillow with sleep-heavy hands.

"Fred?" she called softly.

He coughed. "What?"

"I think you better go t'Doctor Boone t'morra mornin'."

She heard him draw in a long breath, then let it filter out evenly until it was all gone.

"I think so, too," he said in a blurry voice.

ON Friday morning, when he opened the door to the waiting room of Doctor William Boone, a draft of wind scattered papers from the nurse's desk.

"Oh," he said apologetically. "*Le chieggo scuse. Non ne val la pena.*"

Miss Agnes McCarthy had been Doctor Boone's receptionist-nurse for seven years and in that time she'd never heard Fred Elderman speak a single foreign word.

Thus she goggled at him, amazed. "What's that you said?" she asked.

Fred's smile was a nervous twitch of lips.

"Nothing," he said, "miss."

Her returned smile was formal. "Oh." She cleared her throat. "I'm sorry Doctor couldn't see you yesterday."

"That's all right," he told her. "He'll be ready in about ten minutes."

Twenty minutes later, Fred sat down beside Boone's desk and the heavy-set doctor leaned back in his chair with an, "Ailing, Fred?"

Fred explained the situation.

The doctor's cordial smile became, in order, amused, fixed, strained and finally non-existent.

"This is really so?" he demanded.

Fred nodded with grim deliberation. "*Je me laisse conseiller.*"

Doctor Boone's heavy eyebrows lifted a noticeable jot. "French," he said. "What'd you say?"

Fred swallowed. "I said I'm willing to be advised."

"Son of a gun," intoned Doctor Boone, plucking at his lower lip. "*Son* of a gun." He got up and ran exploring hands over Fred's skull. "You haven't received a head blow lately, have you?"

"No," said Fred. "Nothing."

"Hmmm." Doctor Boone drew away his hands and let them drop to his sides. "Well, no apparent bumps or cracks." He buzzed for Miss McCarthy. Then he said, "Well, let's take a try at the X-rays."

The X-rays revealed no break or blot.

The two men sat in the office, discussing it.

"Hard to believe," said the doctor, shaking his head. Fred sighed despondently. "Well, don't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

take on so," Boone said. "It's nothing to be disturbed about. So you're a quiz kid, so what?"

Fred ran nervous fingers over his mustache. "But there's no sense to it. Why is it happening? What is it? The fact is, I'm a little scared."

"Nonsense, Fred. *Nonsense.* You're in good physical condition. That I guarantee."

"But what about my—" Fred hesitated—"my brain?"

Doctor Boone stuck out his lower lip in consoling derision, shaking his head. "I wouldn't worry about that, either." He slapped one palm on the desk top. "Let me think about it, Fred. Consult a few associates. You know—*analyze* it. Then I'll let you know. Fair enough?"

He walked Fred to the door.

"In the meantime," he prescribed, "no worrying about it. There isn't a thing to worry about."

His face as he dialed the phone a few minutes later was not unworried, however.

"Fetlock?" he said, getting his party. "Got a poser for you."

HABIT more than thirst brought Fred to the Windmill that evening. Eva had wanted him to stay home and rest, assuming that his state was due to overwork; but Fred had insisted that it wasn't his health and left the house, just managing to muffle his "*Au revoir.*"

He joined Harry Bullard and Lou Peacock at the bar and finished his first beer in a glum silence while Harry revealed why they shouldn't vote for Legislator Milford Carpenter.

"Tell ya the man's got a private line t'Moscow," he said. "A few men like that in office and we're in for it, take my word." He looked over at Fred staring into his beer. "What's with it, elder man?" he asked, clapping Fred on the shoulder.

Fred told them—as if he were telling about a disease he'd caught.

Lou Peacock looked incredulous. "So that's what you were talking about the other night!"

Fred nodded.

"You're not kiddin' us now?" Harry asked. "Y'know *everything?*"

"Just about," Fred admitted sadly.

A shrewd look overcame Harry's face.

"What if I ask ya somethin' ya *don't* know?"

"I'd be happy," Fred said in a despairing voice.

Harry beamed. "Okay. I won't ask ya about atoms nor chemicals nor anythin' like that. I'll just ask ya t'tell me about the country between my home town Au Sable and Tarva." He hit the bar

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with a contented slap.

Fred looked hopeful briefly, but then his face blanked and he said in an unhappy voice. "Between Au Sable and Tarva, the route is through typical cut-over land that once was covered with virgin pine (*danger: deer on the highway*) and now has only second growth oak, pine and poplar. For years after the decline of the lumber industry, picking huckleberries was one of the chief local occupations."

Harry gaped.

"Because the berries were known to grow in the wake of fires," Fred concluded, "residents deliberately set many fires that roared through the country."

"That's a damn dirty lie!" Harry said, chin trembling belligerently.

Fred looked at him in surprise.

"You shouldn't ought t'go around tellin' lies like that," Harry said. "You call that knowin' the countryside—telling *lies* about it?"

"Take it easy, Harry," Lou cautioned.

"Well," Harry said angrily, "he shouldn't ought to tell lies like that."

"I didn't say it," Fred answered hopelessly. "It's more as though I—I *read it off*."

"Yeah? Well . . ." Harry fingered his glass restlessly.

"You really know *everything*?" Lou asked, partly to ease the tension, partly because he was awed.

"I'm afraid so," Fred replied.

"You ain't just . . . playin' a trick?"

Fred shook his head. "No trick."

LOU PEACOCK looked small and intense. "What can you tell me," he asked in a back-alley voice, "about orange roses?"

The blank look crossed Fred's face again. Then he recited, "Orange is not a fundamental color but a blend of red and pink of varied intensity and yellow. There were very few orange roses prior to the Pernatia strain. All orange, apricot, chamois and coral roses finish with pink more or less accentuated. Some attain that lovely shade—*Cuisse de Nymphe émue*."

Lou Peacock was open-mouthed. "Ain't that something?"

Harry Bullard blew out heavy breath. "What d'ya know about Carpenter?" he asked pugnaciously.

"Carpenter, Milford, born 1898 in Chicago, Illi—"

"Never mind," Harry cut in. "I ain't interested. He's a Commie; that's all I gotta know about him."

"The elements that go into a political campaign," quoth Fred helplessly, "are many—the per-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sonality of the candidates, the issues—if any—the attitude of the press, economic groups, traditions, the opinion polls, the—"

"I tell ya he's a Commie!" Harry declared, voice rising.

"You voted for him last election," Lou said. "As I re—"

"I did *not!*" snarled Harry, getting redder in the face.

The blank look appeared on Fred Elderman's face. "Remembering things that are not so is a kind of memory distortion that goes by several names such as *pathological lying* or *mythomania.*"

"You callin' me a liar, Fred?"

"It differs from ordinary lying in that the speaker comes to believe his own lies and—"

"Where did you get that black eye?" a shocked Eva asked Fred when he came into the kitchen later. "Have you been fighting at *your* age?"

Then she saw the look on his face and ran for the refrigerator. She sat him on a chair and held a piece of beefsteak against his swelling eye while he related what had happened.

"He's a bully," she said. "A bully!"

"No, I don't blame him," Fred disagreed. "I insulted him. I don't even know what I'm saying any more. I'm—I'm all mixed up."

She looked down at his slumped form, an alarmed expression on her face. "When is Doctor Boone going to *do* something for you?"

"I don't know."

A half hour later, against Eva's wishes, he went to clean up the library with a fellow janitor; but the moment he entered the huge room, he gasped, put his hands to his temples and fell down on one knee, gasping, "My head! My *head!*"

It took a long while of sitting quietly in the downstairs hallway before the pain in his skull stopped. He sat there staring fixedly at the glossy tile floor, his head feeling as if it had just gone twenty-nine rounds with the heavyweight champion of the world.

FETLOCK came in the morning. Arthur B., 42, short and stocky, head of the Department of Psychological Sciences, he came bustling along the path in porkpie hat and checkered overcoat, jumped up on the porch, stepped across its worn boards and stabbed at the bell button. While he waited, he clapped leather-gloved hands together energetically and blew out breath clouds.

"Yes?" Eva asked when she opened the door.

Professor Fetlock explained his mission, not noticing how her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

face tightened with fright when he announced his field. Reassured that Doctor Boone had sent him, she led Fetlock up the carpeted steps, explaining, "He's still in bed. He had an attack last night."

"Oh?" said Arthur Fetlock.

When introductions had been made and he was alone with the janitor, Professor Fetlock fired a rapid series of questions. Fred Elderman, propped up with pillows, answered them as well as he could.

"This attack," said Fetlock, "what happened?"

"Don't know, Professor. Walked in the library and—well, it was as if a ton of cement hit me on the head. No—*in* my head."

"Amazing. And this knowledge you say you've acquired—are you conscious of an *increase* in it since your ill-fated visit to the library?"

Fred nodded. "I know more than ever."

The professor bounced the fingertips of both hands against each other. "A book on language by Pei. Section 9-B in the library, book number 429.2, if memory serves. Can you quote from it?"

Fred looked blank, but words followed almost immediately. "Leibnitz first advanced the theory that all language came not from a historically recorded source but from proto-speech. In some respects he was a precursor of—"

"Good, good," said Arthur Fetlock. "Apparently a case of spontaneous telepathic manifestations coupled with clairvoyance."

"Meaning?"

"Telepathy, Elderman. Telepathy! Seems every book or educated mind you come across, you pick clean of content. You worked in the French office, you spoke French. You worked in the Mathematics office, you quoted numbers, tables, axioms. Similarly with all other offices, subjects and individuals." He scowled, purse-lipped. "Ah, but why?"

"*Causa qua re,*" muttered Fred.

A brief wry sound in Professor Fetlock's throat. "Yes, I wish I knew, too. However . . ." He leaned forward. "What's that?"

"How come I can learn so much?" Fred asked worriedly. "I mean—"

"No difficulty there," stated the stocky psychologist. "You see, no man ever utilized the full learning capacity of the brain. It still has an immense potential. Perhaps that's what's happening to you—you're realizing this potential."

"But how?"

"Spontaneously realized telepathy and clairvoyance plus infinite retention and unlimited potential." He whistled softly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Amazing. Positively amazing. Well, I must be going."

"But what'll I do?" Fred begged.

"Why, enjoy it," said the professor expansively. "It's a perfectly fantastic gift. Now look—if I were to gather together a group of faculty members, would you be willing to speak to them? Informally, of course."

"But—"

"They should be entranced, positively entranced. I must do a paper for the *Journal*."

"But what does it mean, Professor?" Fred Elderman asked, his voice shaking.

"Oh, we'll look into it, never fear. Really, this is revolutionary. An unparalleled phenomenon." He made a sound of delighted disbelief. "In-credible."

WHEN Professor Fetlock had gone, Fred sat defeatedly in his bed. So there was nothing to be done—nothing but spout endless, inexplicable words and wonder into the nights what terrible thing was happening to him. Maybe the professor was excited; maybe it was exciting intellectual fare for outsiders. For him, it was only grim and increasingly frightening business.

Why? Why? It was the question he could neither answer nor escape.

He was thinking that when Eva came in. He lifted his gaze as she crossed the room and sat down on the bed.

"What did he say?" she asked anxiously.

When he told her, her reaction was the same as his.

"That's all? Enjoy it?" She pressed her lips together in anger. "What's the matter with him? Why did Doctor Boone send him?"

He shook his head, without an answer.

There was such a look of confused fear on his face that she reached out her hand suddenly and touched his cheek. "Does your head hurt, dear?"

"It hurts inside," he said. "In my . . . " There was a clicking in his throat. "If one considers the brain as a tissue which is only moderately compressible, surrounded by two variable factors—the blood it contains and the spinal fluid which surrounds it and fills the ventricles inside the brain we have—"

He broke off spasmodically and sat there, quivering.

"God help us," she whispered.

"As Sextus Empiricus says in his *Arguments Against Belief in a God,* those who affirm, positively, that God exists cannot avoid falling into an impiety. For—"

"Fred, stop it!"

He sat looking at her dazedly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Fred, you don't . . . know what you're saying. Do you?"

"No. I never do. I just—Eva, what's going on!"

She held his hand tightly and stroked it. "It's all right, Fred. Please don't worry so."

But he did worry. For behind the complex knowledge that filled his mind, he was still the same man, simple, uncomprehending—and afraid.

Why was it happening?

It was as if, in some hideous way, he were a sponge filling more and more with knowledge and there would come a time when there was no room left and the sponge would explode.

PROFESSOR Fetlock stopped him in the hallway Monday morning. "Elderman, I've spoken to the members of the faculty and they're all as excited as I. Would this afternoon be too soon? I can get you excused from any work you may be required to do."

Fred looked bleakly at the professor's enthusiastic face. "It's all right."

"Splendid! Shall we say four-thirty then? My offices?"

"All right."

"And may I make a suggestion?" asked the professor. "I'd like you to tour the university—all of it."

When they separated, Fred went back down to the basement to put away his tools.

At four-twenty-five, he pushed open the heavy door to the Department of Psychological Sciences. He stood there waiting patiently, one hand on the knob, until someone in the large group of faculty members saw him. Professor Fetlock disengaged from the group and hurried over.

"Elderman," he said, "come in, come in."

"Professor, has Doctor Boone said anything more?" Fred insisted. "I mean about—"

"No, nothing. Never fear, we'll get to it. But come along. I want you to—Ladies and gentlemen, your attention, please!"

Fred was introduced to them, standing in their midst, trying to look at ease when his heart and nerves were pulsing with a nervous dread.

"And did you follow my suggestion," Fetlock asked loudly, "and tour all the departments in the university?"

"Yes . . . sir."

"Good, good." Professor Fetlock nodded emphatically. "That should complete the picture then. Imagine it, ladies and gentlemen—the sum total of knowledge in our entire university—all in the head of this one man!"

There were sounds of doubt from the faculty.

"No, no, I'm serious!" claimed Fetlock. "The proof of the pud-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ding is quite ample. Ask away."

Fred Elderman stood there in the momentary silence, thinking of what Professor Fetlock had said. The knowledge of an entire university in his head. That meant there was no more to be gotten here then.

What now?

THEN the questions came—and the answers, dead-voiced and monotonous.

"What will happen to the Sun in 15 million years?"

"If the Sun goes on radiating at its present rate for 15 million years, its whole weight will be transformed into radiation."

"What is a root tone?"

"In harmonic units, the constituent tones seem to have unequal harmonic values. Some seem to be more important and dominate the sounding unity. These roots are—"

All the knowledge of an entire university in his head.

"The five orders of Roman architecture."

"Tuscan, Doric, Corinthian, Ionic, Composite, Tuscan being a simplified Doric, Doric retaining the triglyphs, Corinthian characterized by—"

No more knowledge there he didn't possess. His brain crammed with it. Why?

"Buffer capacity?"

"The buffer capacity of a solution may be defined as dx/dpH where dx is the small amount of strong acid or—"

Why?

"A moment ago. French."

"*Il n'y a qu'un instant.*"

Endless questions, increasingly excited until they were almost being shouted.

"What is literature involved with?"

"Literature is, of its nature, involved with ideas because it deals with Man in society, which is to say that it deals with formulations, valuations and—"

Why?

"Rule for masthead lights on steam vessels?" A laugh.

"A steam vessel when under way shall carry (a) on or in front of the foremast or, if a vessel without a foremast, then in the forepart of the vessel, a bright, white light so constructed as to—"

No laughter. Questions.

"How would a three-step rocket take off?"

"The three-step rocket would take off vertically and be given a slight tilt in an easterly direction, Brennschluss taking place about—"

"Who was Count Bernadotte?"

"What are the by-products of oil?"

"Which city is—"

"How can—"

"What is—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"When did—"

And when it was over and he had answered every question they asked, there was a great, heavy silence. He stood trembling and yet numb, beginning to get a final knowledge.

The phone rang then and made everyone start.

Professor Fetlock answered it. "For you, Elderman."

Fred walked over to the phone and picked up the receiver.

"Fred?" he heard Eva say.

"*Oui.*"

"What?"

He twitched. "I'm sorry, Eva. I mean yes, it's I."

HE heard her swallowing on the other end of the line. "Fred, I . . . just wondered why you didn't come home, so I called your office and Charlie said—"

He told her about the meeting.

"Oh," she said. "Well, will you be—home for supper?"

The last knowledge was seeping, rising slowly.

"I'll try, Eva. I think so, yes."

"I been worried, Fred."

He smiled sadly. "Nothing to worry about, Eva."

Then the message sliced abruptly across his mind and he said, "Good-by, Eva," and dropped the receiver. "I have to go," he told Fetlock and the others.

He didn't exactly hear what they said in return. The words, the transition from room to hall were blurred over by his sudden, concentrated need to get out on the campus.

The questioning faces were gone and he was hurrying down the hall on driven feet, his action as his speech had been—unmotivated, beyond understanding. Something drew him on. He had spoken without knowing why; now he rushed down the long hallway without knowing why.

He rushed across the lobby, gasping for breath. The message had said, *Come. It's time.*

These things, these many things

I've Got Them All!! Every One!!

ALL the Science Fiction, Fantasy, Weird and Supernatural Books in Print in America or England! Send 10c for giant printed checklist of over 1000 available titles including over 250 paperbound books at 25c each up; also details of my proposed Mail Science Fiction Library.

I also have many thousands of used Science Fiction Books and back issue Magazines. Send me your want lists without obligation and I will quote prices. I WANT TO BUY OR TRADE FOR All Science Fiction, Weird or Fantasy Books and Magazines. Tell me what you have to sell or swap.

FRANK A. SCHMID

42 SHERWOOD AVENUE

FRANKLIN SQUARE, L. I., N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—who would want to know them? These endless facts about all Earthly knowledge.

Earthly knowledge . . .

As he came half tripping, half running down the building steps into the early darkness, he saw the flickering bluish-white light in the sky. It was aiming over the trees, the buildings, straight at him.

He stood petrified, staring at it, and knew exactly why he had acquired all the knowledge he had.

The blue-white light bore directly at him with a piercing, whining hum. Across the dark campus, a young girl screamed.

Life on the other planets, the last words crossed his mind, *is not only possibility but high probability.*

Then the light hit him and bounced straight back up to its source, like lightning streaking in reverse from lightning rod to storm cloud, leaving him in awful blackness.

THEY found the old man wandering across the campus grass like a somnambulant mute. They spoke to him, but his tongue was still. Finally, they were obliged to look in his wallet, where they found his name and address and took him home.

A year later, after learning to talk all over again, he said his first stumbling words. He said them one night to his wife when she found him in the bathroom holding a sponge in his hand.

"Fred, what are you doing?"

"*I been squeezed,*" he said.

—RICHARD MATHESON

FORECAST

Most of our readers like serials—and we try to please them with some of the finest book-length novels science fiction has ever produced. But what about those who prefer complete stories? They deserve to be satisfied and so all the stories in next month's issue will be complete.

Robert Sheckley leads off with a long, adventuresome, plot-twisty novelet that begins with A TICKET TO TRANAI—the utopia of the Galaxy—and ends with a transfer to just about the last place you would expect. Oh, it's a certified genuine utopia, all right, where all problems have been solved. But the way they've been solved is—well, devastatingly logical!

If you have never heard of a writer named Cordwainer Smith, make a deeply incised mental note of him now . . . after you've read his excitingly told novelet, THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON, you'll want to keep seeing him in print. Only partners can fight this deadliest of games—and the one way to dissolve the partnership is to be personally dissolved!

There will be at least one other novelet, plus short stories and our regular features and departments, of course. Nice issue. Don't miss it, will you?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Freelancer

By ROBERT ZACKS

Once these laws were passed, any time in history — however bad — were the good old days!

Illustrated by ASHMAN

JEB WAS shaken from his bed; his dream told him it was a glacier with wild winds howling laughter, and when he opened his eyes, shivering, he saw his wife, Laurie, had pulled the heat switch off. She stood there glaring. Today her hair was a lovely purple with a fashionable streak of gold starting from the forehead, but it didn't help the cold look on her face.

"Get up, you bum," she said in her sweet contralto. "Go out and earn some credits or I'll certify you."

The thought of being transferred by the Economy Agent to Assigned Duty Status, with its virtual imprisonment to monotony by the Welfare Office, made Jeb tumble from bed and fumble for his shoes.

"My darling," he said placatingly, "how beautiful you are this morning! How undeserving I am of you!"

"You're damn right about that," said Laurie with bitterness. "When I think of the men I could have married, the wonderful life I might have lived, instead of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scrimping along with a no-good freelance Monitor like you. . ."

"*Sometimes* I do pretty well. Three years ago, I sent you to the Pleasure Palace for a month, remember?"

"Three years ago. Big deal."

SHE flounced out of the room. Sadly, Jeb went to the closet and examined the various uniforms and disguises that were part of his equipment as a freelance Monitor. As he selected the silver and black skintight suit of an Air Pollution Inspector, he wistfully remembered how nice it had been when Laurie had smiled at him. Immediately a flood of determination filled him to go out and do big things today. Maybe he would make a big strike and get a nice fat commission; then Laurie would . . .

The televisor buzzed, flickered, and the genial face of the man from Marriage Relations appeared.

"Good morning, Monitor Jeb," said the man, smiling. "And how are things 'twixt you and your beloved?"

"Rough," moaned Jeb. "She's really in a foul mood today."

The man from Marriage Relations beamed. "Fine, fine, glad to hear it."

"Huh?" said Jeb.

"Her Sadism Index Rating went up five points," the man explained. "We wanted to make sure we hadn't made an error. Well, that certainly is good news for you two. I'll guess you'll both be all right now."

"All *right*? Are you *kidding?*"

"Now, now, we know what's best for you. Your Masochism Rating is quite high, you know. Laurie is just what you need. Why, you two were *made* for each other."

Suddenly the man stopped talking, gasped, and the screen flickered and went dead. Jeb's astonishment was wiped away by the soft, silvery bell tone of his portable Monitex, a flat two-by-six-inch machine resting on a shelf nearby. As Jeb wildly lunged toward it, he saw it was glowing red, activated by a violation, and as he snatched it up, the coded reading dial had a notification: *Bx-P*-203.

Trembling, Jeb pressed a button on the lower left of the Monitex and a voice promptly droned mechanically from the waferlike loudspeaker hidden under the surface, giving details of the violation.

"Bx-P-203 — At ten minutes after eight A.M., Monitex 27965 of Freelance Monitor Jeb picked up violation of Copyright on the phrase 'were made for each other.' Said phrase property of Joint Owners registered under Copyright of Verbal Phrases Act

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of 1996. Owners, Magnum Motion Picture Studios and Universal Publications. Fee for use 80 credits, commission fifty per cent."

THE voice went dead and the flat metal surface glowed with letters strung into words reading "Please Collect and Remit Total Fee."

As Jeb uttered a yelp of delight, Laurie came running into the room.

"I heard the Monitex bell," she said eagerly.

"You sure did," crowed Jeb. "Now aren't you proud of me? I was smart enough to leave the Monitex on all night. We picked up a Verbal Copyright violation . . ."

"You left it *on* all night?" screeched Laurie, her joy fading. "You imbecile, the leasing charge on the Monitex is ten credits an hour, isn't it? What's your commission on this violation?"

"Forty credits. I — I guess I'm losing money, b-but . . ."

Laurie gave him her opinion of his supposed shrewdness.

Jeb unhappily went to the televisor and punched out a call on the button keyboard which would recall the image of the Marriage Relations representative. He shrank back in alarm as the man's glaring face appeared.

"Sorry to hook you this way, old boy," said Jeb meekly, "but it's my job, you know. Got you on a Verbal for using 'were made for each other.' That phrase is owned by —"

"You dirty, sneaking spy!" yelled the man on the televisor screen. "I'll bet your grandfather informed on diamond smugglers for a percentage."

"He . . ." Jeb feebly started to protest.

"It's a hell of a thing," raved the other, "when a man can't even use words to express himself without paying . . ."

In alarm, Jeb leaned forward and hastily punched a combination of buttons on the televisor. One half the screen blanked. The image of the Marriage Relations representative moved to the right and the lean, puritanical face of Jeb's supervisor, Dirdon, flared onto the left half.

Dirdon looked icily at Jeb. "What is it?"

"Complaint on policy and purpose of Copyright Law," said Jeb nervously. "Would you please handle it, sir? I'll switch you."

AS DIRDON'S mouth pressed into a thin line and he nodded, Jeb flicked a switch. Both men on the screen immediately turned profiles to Jeb and Laurie, seeing each other in their own screens.

"Did you have a complaint,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sir?" asked Dirdon.

"I don't know who the devil you are," shouted the man from Marriage Relations, "but I assume you're one of those pirates cashing in on that copyright swindle. That new law has gone much too far. Copyrighting a work of skill, art, or expression is okay, I suppose, but to extend it to everyday speech, to verbal phrases —"

"Now just a minute," said Dirdon briskly. "You buy greeting cards, I suppose, sir?"

"So I buy greeting cards, so what?"

"What are greeting cards exactly? Just a small square of paper with a few words, a *very* few words of sentiment on them. Words that any normal person certainly might be able to —"

"Any moron can write a better sentiment than those lousy cards express."

"But *you* buy them sometimes?"

"Well . . . sometimes."

"Why?" demanded Dirdon.

"Saves me the bother of figuring out what to say, I guess," was the growled answer.

"Right. And you *paid* for these very few moronic phrases, paid good hard credits for them. Now isn't it just as logical to protect owners of a phrase when somebody else uses it verbally?"

"But," said the man desperately, "I didn't *want* to violate the Copyright on Verbal Use. I didn't *know* that phrase was under Copyright. Who can keep track of them all? Every day, more phrases and expressions are under Copyright as somebody else's property. Why, first thing you know, there'll hardly be any words left to say."

"THAT ISN'T true," objected Dirdon. "Copyright Law on Verbal Use is a great boon to society. Rule 7 for admission to protection requires that the phrase covered be one which may be considered 'shopworn, overused and so artistically traditional that it is a wearisome truism.' That means that verbal mediocrity is heavily penalized, which is right and proper. Why, you ought to be ashamed to use a phrase like 'were made for each other.' It's Monitors like Jeb who make you watch your words and think very carefully before you speak."

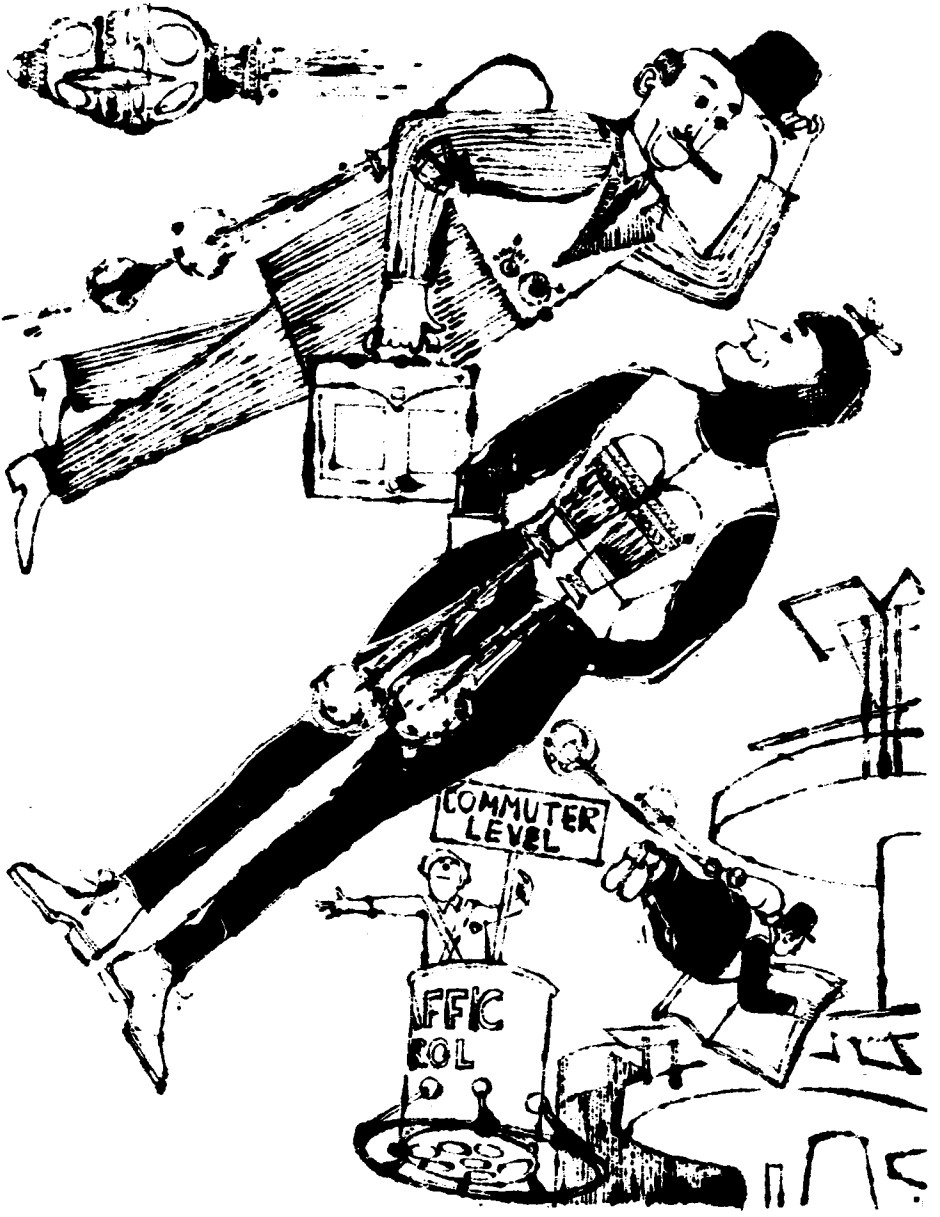
"Listen, stupid —"

"Already," Dirdon plowed on, happily oratorical, "our citizens are being forced to express themselves more richly, with initiative, casting off triteness!"

The man from Marriage Relations looked disgusted. "Ah," he said angrily, "why don't you drop dead."

Bong!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE man moaned as the Monitex Jeb held glowed red with another violation. Jeb grinned and pressed the loudspeaker button.

"Mz-R-14," droned the voice. "At half-past eight, Monitex 27965 of Freelance Monitor Jeb picked a violation of . . ."

The man covered his ears. After a few moments, he took his hands away and looked numbly from the screen as Dirdon smirked.

"What's the Copyright fee on that one?" he asked.

"The use of the words 'Drop Dead' will cost you ten credits," said Jeb. "We'll bill you for both violations."

Dirdon was beaming as Jeb snapped the whole screen dark.

With a start, Jeb remembered Laurie and turned to face her anger. "See, honeybunch?" he said hopefully. "Even if I did lose a few credits on the leasing charge by leaving the Monitex on all night, it looks like a lucky day. Why, I'll bet I make enough commissions today to send you on a nice vacation."

Laurie gave him a narrow-eyed, cold stare.

"You'd better," she said. "Because I've just about had enough of you. Either you make a big killing today or I certify you by midnight tonight. Do you hear me?"

Jeb nodded in fright. He scuttled out of the room, picking up a gravity harness from the stand in the foyer and not pausing to buckle himself into it until she slammed the door behind him.

Sighing, Jeb got into the harness and took off. He floated out the opening at the end of the corridor at the sixty-story level and joined the stream of commuters at two thousand feet.

As he set his speed at thirty miles an hour, he came abreast of a man wearing the solid gray uniform of an Unassigned Citizen. Jeb saw the look of misery on the man's drawn face and felt so sympathetic, he didn't even bother to hide his Monitex in its disguising parcel. You had to be pretty low to make your money out of a guy in that tough status. *Hell*, thought Jeb defiantly, *let him see it and be warned; I don't care. Even if the Inspector sees me.*

He noted the Unassigned Citizen staring down at the panorama of the vast city beneath them. At different lower levels, myriad flights of streaming citizens moved in various directions. The tremendous blocks of buildings had thin slits between them at the bottom of which were walks filled with antlike figures.

"Ugly, huh?" said Jeb.

He got a moody stare in return. "Believe it or not, I suddenly find

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it beautiful. Compared to where I'm heading, anyway."

JEB WAS shocked. "Oh?"

"I've been certified," said the man bluntly. "Not enough credits for support. I had to go to the Welfare Office and ask for assistance. Had my own gravity harness repair shop till a month ago. But the new ones are foolproof, business fell off. Now I'm in for it."

"Gosh," muttered Jeb, "that's really tough. But what do you mean, 'compared to where you're heading?' Sure, you'll be assigned a dirty underground job, on the cables maybe, and the pay will be ridiculous, but it'll be right here, won't it?"

"Haven't you heard?" The other smiled grimly. "So many of us small business guys are being certified, the Welfare people had no more jobs. And you know the law. Indigents must be assigned to some duty. And it just happens that they're opening new mines on Mars and they can't get help. I've no choice."

"Mines?" Jeb paled at the thought. "That Melbonite dust. One speck through the sealed-in suit and you've got a burn they still can't heal." He shuddered; then, seeing the face of the Unassigned Citizen, he said soothingly, "But those suits are foolproof, I understand."

"Not always," said the man in gray. "Anyway, they haven't licked the ventilation problem. The last suits they tried to air-condition, so much Melbonite dust filtered in . . ." He took a deep breath of horror. "So the ones in use become awfully sweaty. I'm going to a living hell . . ."

Bong!

Jeb's Monitex glowed red with a violation. "Living Hell" was an old-fashioned dramatic phrase somebody sharp had dug up after diligent study and copyrighted in the hope of picking up a few credits.

As Jeb numbly listened to the droning voice detail the facts and four credits charge, the man in the gray suit said mirthlessly, "Well, well, that's just fine. Thanks a lot, my friend, for a nice sendoff."

Jeb snapped off the Monitex. "Look," he said hurriedly, "that was an accident. This one is on me. Here." He took four credit tokens from a pocket and thrust the silvery rectangles at the Unassigned Citizen. "Put these aside until you're billed for the violation and pay it with my credits. Okay?"

"Thanks," said the man gratefully. "I'll remember you."

Jeb gave him a twisted grin. "You may not have to, pal. I may be right beside you in the next

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shipment. My wife is ready to certify me for non-support. If I don't clean up a nice fat commission by tonight, blooey, it's the mines for me, too."

THE Unassigned Citizen started to form the words *Good luck!* when Jeb hastily interrupted, "That's on Copyright. Take it easy."

"Uh . . . my heart goes beside yours," said the man, choosing his words carefully. "My sympathy has arms, one of which is around your mighty shoulders. I say to you farewell."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Jeb. He pumped the other's hand. "I like the way you put that. It's new. It has a freshness."

They smiled at each other. Then the oval building that housed The SuperMonitex Feeder came into view and Jeb waved good-by and swung out of the commuter stream in the regulation spiral under the cold eyes of a golden-clad traffic cop. Jeb landed on the balcony ledge outside the ninetieth-level corridor and walked in, finally entering a huge room in the center of which was a circular wall with plug outlets and sets of dials and screens at intervals all the way around.

Jeb greeted a few of his coworkers, but didn't pause to gossip. He wasn't in a gay mood this morning, as were many of them who were gleefully recounting some of the slick violations they'd picked up. Jeb went to the circular wall and plugged his Monitex into a receptacle. He punched a button marked *New Copyrights* and waited for the humming to stop indicating that his Monitex had been fed all the latest phrases added to the huge group protected by law.

With his Monitex coded up to date, its memory bank fattened, Jeb went to the supply room to requisition a hollowed-out air pollution meter to conceal his Monitex. A hand tapped his shoulder.

"Hi, there," said Monitor Platt, a lean-faced, smirking man Jeb disliked. "I just came off night shift. Had a big evening."

"Yeah?" asked Jeb, his skin crawling. Monitor Platt specialized in copyright violations in the area of lakes and parks where lovers murmured words they soon found out were not at all new and quite expensive.

Monitor Platt chuckled. "Been cleaning up on a new copyright just registered. The good old wolf whistle. One hundred credits fee."

Even Jeb was startled. "But that's not a phrase."

"No, but it's a 'shopworn, overused and wearisome truism,' so they slipped it through."

"Golly, next thing you know,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they'll be copyrighting a deep sigh or the smacking sound of a kiss."

MONITOR Platt laughed in appreciation. Then, as Jeb frowned and attended to fitting his detector into the shell of the air pollution meter, Monitor Platt regaled him with the violations that had poured credits into his pockets.

"Got a cute dame, nice curves, getting a good hugging under the moon near the lake. She says timidly to this sap, 'It's the first time I've ever been kissed, honestly.' Bong! Fifty credits for the expense account. And another one I picked up in a canoe parked on the bank. This guy says soulfully, 'I'm not the marrying kind, but . . .' He never gets a chance to finish. Bong! Thirty credits. I sure cleaned up today. If I were you, I'd head straight for the snuggle spots. A whole raft of corny love lines have been blanketed in, you know, and nobody's alerted."

"Uh, well," muttered Jeb, who didn't want any enemies and so didn't express his feelings about making a living from such a source, "I already have my schedule figured out, but I'll keep it in mind."

"Where you headed for?"

Monitor Jeb was relieved when the big bell sounded, its brassy reverberations warning Monitors to quit gabbing and get out into the field to scoop up violations and revenue for the corporation. The paunchy office manager, seated up on a small balcony overlooking the giant hall, saw that the signal was, as usual, being ignored. Indignantly he punched a button on the board facing him and a repulsive odor filled the air which had the Monitors hastily seizing their equipment and leaving the building.

Jeb gladly took off into the windy canyons between the skyscrapers. Instead of ascending, he plummeted down forty stories and drifted along, his nostrils twitching with the bad air at this height. Fleetingly, he had the grumbling thought that, with present-day technology, there was no excuse at all for polluted atmosphere.

Oh, well, he thought, *one of these days, somebody public-minded will do something about it. Right now, I've got to make enough to stop Laurie from certifying me.*

He felt a sudden chill as he recalled his wife's threat. Quickly he sought out the first location he'd mapped out for some easy revenue, the personnel office of the Air Pollution Control Corp. Jeb switched off anti-gravity and heavily walked through the corridor, stepped inside the deep-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rugged, gray and green office and joined the small nervous group of inspectors waiting for interviews.

JEB, in his air pollution uniform, was as acceptable as a long-used piece of furniture. Unnoticed, he sat on one of the hard benches with the others. They stared and listened to the interview being conducted by the genial, balding man behind the open partition ten feet away. The air pollution inspector facing him was tense, pale and overanxious.

"Yes, indeed, you *do* have a good record," the personnel man was saying approvingly. "No absences in five years, no latenesses. Very good indeed."

"Then," said the air pollution inspector eagerly, "I'll be upgraded? I'll get that promotion promised two years ago?"

The personnel man cleared his throat, but his smile remained radiant. "Just as soon as business picks up, we'll give you a promotion and raise in pay . . ."

Bong!

A roar of mirth arose from the waiting air pollution men as Monitor Jeb nervously pulled his Monitex from its concealing pollution meter shell and read the violation off to the enraged personnel man. A fifty credit fee for use of the copyrighted verbal phrase *Just as soon as business picks up, we'll give you a promotion and raise in pay.*

As Jeb escaped the wrath of his victim, one of the men snickering nearby muttered, "Hah! He'll have to rack his tiny brain for a new way of stalling us from now on."

In the next three hours, Jeb drove himself hard. He picked up a twenty credit fee when a doorman outside a Teletheatre had bonged the Monitex with "Plenty of seats inside!" He scooped up another violation in a bar when a bleary-eyed man with veins showing in his nose murmured to the bartender, "Well, I'll have just *one* more." He wandered to the telephone booths and waited for one of the standby violations to fall into his pocket; sure enough, a handsome, dark-eyed fellow murmured into the mouthpiece, "I'll be working late tonight again, honey; sorry."

The time passed too swiftly and when Jeb paused to get a bite of food, he saw, dismayed, that even though he was having a pretty good day, it was far from the killing he'd promised Laurie. Ten and twenty credit violations didn't make a man rich.

What I need is one of the really big ones, thought Jeb desperately.

With fumbling fingers, he pressed out a core number on the Monitex.

It glowed blue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The voice droned, "Information!"

Jeb asked eagerly, "What have we got with fees of a thousand credits and higher?"

A MOMENT hummed by. Then the voice announced that a large batch of political "corn" had been copyrighted in view of the current election campaign. Jeb listened with mounting excitement to some of them: *If I am elected, taxes will be reduced . . . As I look upon the intelligent faces in my audience . . . I am reminded of a story . . . What a lovely child, Madam . . . A helicopter on every roof . . .*

Jeb shut it off, perspiration breaking out on his face. It was a uranium mine! Jeb's mind reeled at the astonishing fee set for these copyright violations. A thousand credits per use. The party in power was really out to fight off the opposing Traditionalist Party with every possible trick, with the result that Jeb could make the biggest cleanup of his life.

That is, if he got away alive.

Full of foreboding, Jeb floated up toward the meeting rooms of the local Traditionalist Headquarters, which were on the fiftieth level of a nearby skyscraper. His terrified adrenal glands kicked his heart into a frenzy. The boys who ran the local club were no patsies. Many an argumentative citizen had been found floating in the rarified stratosphere, frozen stiff, with his antigravity belt turned on full and his hands bound so he could not stop the upward climb.

Monitor Jeb nervously drifted into the corridor opening and restored gravity. He sneaked past the open door, getting a quick glimpse of a hall filled with citizens listening to a red-faced, stoutish man on a platform.

Jeb frantically searched for and, with throat-catching relief, found the back entrance to the big hall. It led to a dusty area of scaffolding and discarded, rusting tools. Now Jeb was crawling down an incline leading under the platform and found the small, railed-off area which once had housed a hidden prompter for musical entertainments.

Panting, Jeb squatted in the dark, hearing the booming voice just above him, only slighty muffled. As Jeb shoved the Monitex up against the crack in the boards over him, the speaker's voice came to him strongly, "Now, fellers, you're all precinct captains and it's a helluva empty title to have when your party is outa power. But if we get back on the gravy train — well, need I say more?"

A muffled roar from the audience made Jeb crouch worriedly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Now we're gonna take this election, see? I want all you *loyal party workers . . .*"

Bong!

HOWLS of rage shook the walls and reverberated through to Jeb as the political hacks recognized the sound and understood that somewhere a Monitex had automatically recorded the voice vibration pattern of the speaker in a Verbal Copyright violation.

"Kill the dirty spy!" screamed the speaker.

Bong! went the Monitex.

"Lynch him!"

In three minutes of unguarded outrage, Jeb had recorded ten thousand credits in violations which the speakers never could escape because, like fingerprints, all voice patterns were registered by the government.

Jeb turned to the exit behind him and crawled painfully for twenty feet, then got up and began running. He ran straight into a brawny body at the turn of the corridor. The next thing he knew, he was on his back and ruthless hands were banging his head against the floor.

The siren of a golden-clad policeman cut the air and magically the hands fell away, leaving Jeb sprawling and groggy.

After a moment, he was able to focus his eyes. The policeman stared down at him, fists authoritively on his hips.

"Well, I came just in time, eh?" said the cop. "Saved your neck."

Bong! went the Monitex.

Jeb said hastily, "It's all right, Officer. It's on the house."

"It had damn well better be," growled the policeman. "If you know what's good for you —"

Bong! went the Monitex.

"Go on, get outa here before I run ya in," yelled the officer.

Bong! went the Monitex.

"HAVE a good time, dear," Jeb called after Laurie as she happily took off into space from their level, clutching her purse, which was jammed with enough credits to keep her brimful of fun for two whole months at the Pleasure Palace.

"Don't you worry about that," said Laurie over her shoulder.

Jeb went back to his apartment. He stretched out on the couch, contentment welling up in him. He opened the footstool nearby and, within its archaic shape, slid open the cunningly concealed refrigerator. He took out a plastic cone of beer.

"A-ah!" sighed Jeb. How wonderful to be alone, free of Laurie's nagging for two whole months! A superb reward for his hard work. How clever of the government to have passed such a regulation!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After a while, like wax melting, his grin drooped away. It certainly was quiet, wasn't it?

Within half an hour, he was wild and didn't know why. Jittering, he dialed his televisor and the man from Marriage Relations appeared on the screen. He glared at Jeb and cautiously looked around for the Monitex until he spotted it.

"Shut that thing off or no advice," snapped the man.

"It's *off!* Look, I don't know what's bothering me. Can I have special permission to join my wife on her vacation? Or get her back here?"

"Afraid not," said the man. "The principle of working so one's wife can have a vacation has been established through the centuries; the government merely put it into law. And as for joining her or getting her back here — that's against the law."

"But that's unfair!" yelled Jeb.

"Oh?" The man smiled. "So! I'm glad to see how happy, how perfect is the marriage we arranged for you." He rubbed his hands in delight. "She's just barely gone and already you miss her. Wonderful."

"Wonderful? I'm *suffering!*"

The man from Marriage Relations glanced at a dial nearby. "Of course you are. Suffering is the ideal joy for a Masochist. Just think what a lovely two months of missing her you'll have."

"All right, so it's a rule that I have to send her on a vacation and can't join her," Jeb complained savagely, "but, damn it, she doesn't have to *enjoy* it!"

"Well," said the man, looking back to Jeb, "there's the answer. Your Masochism index has gone down any number of points. You're angry!"

Jeb thought it over. "You bet I am! But what do I do about it?"

"Why," said the man from Marriage Relations, "the same thing husbands have been doing ever since they started working to send their wives away on vacations. When the cat's away, you know —" He stopped in alarm.

Jeb grinned. "I told you the Monitex is off. But thanks for the trite truism. She thinks *she's* the only one who'll have a vacation, eh? I'll show her!"

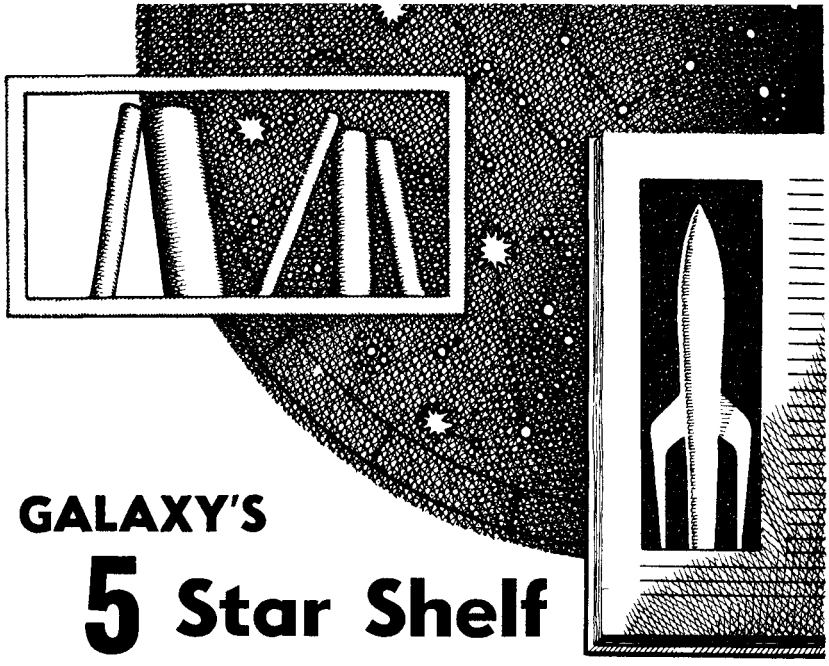
"Service is our motto. And it really is," the man said pugnaciously. "We own the Copyright."

The face flickered off the screen and Jeb began poking around in innocent-looking secret places for a little black book he hadn't thought of using in years.

He was dismayed to find himself singing "My wife's gone to the country, hooray, hooray," until he remembered that he actually had shut off the Monitex.

—ROBERT ZACKS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

BEFORE going into my regular routine, I would like to poach on Editor Gold's preserve and present you with a tiny short story sent me by 11-year-old Harold Zellner of Lake Worth, Florida. Personally, I think it's a pretty smart little tale! It's called:

RYME OF GODS

"The preacher stood up. He spoke, his robot body humming. His followers kneeled. 'And now we read from the Book of Books, the Book of Truth, the Book of the Great God Man, creator of the Universe, who hath gone up to Heaven, long ago.'

"The church was large, and the preacher had to talk loudly to drown out the humming of the hundred of robot bodies. 'And now we read from Psalm 17, the truth of truths.'

"The preacher flipped through the Book of Books, trying to find Psalm 17. Outside, wind blew over the rubble and the skeleton of broken cities.

"The preacher finally found Psalm 17. He read aloud the truth of truths:

"'Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow . . .'"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A decade or two from now, this issue may have great value as a collector's item — the first appearance of Harold Zellner!

YOU SHALL KNOW THEM by Vercors. Pocket Books, 25c

I AM OVER two years late with this one, but in view of its brilliance it is never too late to call it to your attention. The story is uniquely original, I believe: an attempt on the part of men of good will to broaden the definition of "human being" by achieving interbreeding between Man and an almost extinct type of ape.

The story itself is shocking and fascinating, and the moral and ethical implications tremendous. You'll recognize the book on your newstand by the two words, printed in inch-and-a-half letters on the cover: READ THIS. Them's my sentiments, too.

EXPLORATION OF THE MOON by R. A. Smith. Text by Arthur C. Clarke. Harper & Bros., $2.50

R. A. SMITH is a British artist and rocket designer, and why we haven't heard more of him before this, I don't know. While his techniques are quite different from those of Bonestell, et al, his pictures — there are 45 magnificent plates in the book — are top grade. Furthermore, the whole future development of space flight from an instrument-carrying rocket in an orbit around Earth through the full development of the Moon to the preliminary exploration of Mars is presented in logical — and chronological — order.

It's a fascinatingly "factual" portrayal of our future in space and Arthur Clarke's full and bright text captions add the realism of science to the imagination of art.

THE OLD DIE RICH AND OTHER SCIENCE FICTION STORIES by H. L. Gold. Crown Publishers, $3.00

HERE'S A real must — Editor Gold's first book of stories — twelve of them and every one a gem!

A few (despite the title) are pure fantasies: "Trouble with Water," for example, in which the fantasy aspect is made all the more appealing by the nature of its Arthur Kober-like characters and environment.

Most of the tales, though, have that sensitive combination of imaginations that I like to call *science fantasy* — almost supernatural development combined with vividly alive and plausible motivation and shrewd scientific

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and societal extrapolation.

Among my favorites in the book are "At the Post," "Problem in Murder," "The Old Die Rich," "Love in the Dark" (delicious!) and "Trouble with Water;" but all, with one or two exceptions (which Aitchell himself points out in his novel and excellent working notes and analysis that accompany each story), are way up there at the top of the literary pile.

It's a genuinely distinguished collection.

REBIRTH by John Wyndham. Ballantine Books, cloth $2.00, *paper* 35c

THIS IS A fresh new version of the old plot about a post-atomic-war mutant society. It is so skillfully done that the fact that it's not a shiny new idea makes absolutely no difference.

I have put it on my shelf next to Padgett's *Mutant;* and when you compare the two, I think you will agree that variety within existing frameworks is one of the truly healthy directions for science fiction to take.

HELL'S PAVEMENT by Damon Knight. Lion Books, 25c

FOR A TENSE experience in a mad and tragic world of tomorrow, I recommend this, Damon Knight's first book. Sure, it's confusing — his world of tomorrow is a crazy bouillabaisse of compulsive (or rather *compelled*) consumption in a series of mutually antagonistic societies. Sure, it's sad, for it extrapolates only too realistically some of the modern trends. But it's good withal.

It is based on a story Knight wrote for *Astounding* in 1951, called "The Analogues." Some of you may remember its showing how an invention that should have prevented crime, war and violence was turned to sinister uses by slick men of ill will. Well, this carries the idea to its ultimate conclusion — and it ain't pretty. But it makes taut reading.

THE ROCKET PIONEERS ON THE ROAD TO SPACE by Beryl Williams and Samuel Epstein. Julian Messner, Inc., $3.75

FOR A SOLID introduction to the lives and works of the men who have fathered rocket propulsion and reaction engines, this book could hardly be beat. From William Congreve through the "new pioneers" at White Sands, the authors present biographical and technical information of the most exciting sort, and do so in an easy but not overpopularized way.

I could only wish there were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more in the book about Frank Whittle, the father of the modern jet engine, but I guess that's another book.

BEYOND EDEN by David Duncan. Ballantine Books, $2.00 *and* 35c

THIS TALE is even better than Duncan's first, *Dark Dominion.* In that one, the story was fine but the science bizarre, to say the least. Here the story is as good and the science remarkably convincing.

The tale deals with an enormous atom-powered salt-water distillation plant in California, in which the end product is fresh water for irrigation and the by-products every element known to Man — including the uranium that runs the show.

An unexpected by-product is a "substance" that stimulates life enormously and it is around this baffling phenomenon, plus the petty unwillingness of a certain Congressman to permit it to be used for Man's benefit, that the plot revolves. The style is understated, the characters true, the "message" uncomfortably pertinent to our times.

CONQUEST OF THE SPACE SEA by Robert Moore Williams; THE GALACTIC BREED by Leigh Brackett (originally THE STARMEN). Ace Books, Inc., 35c

THE "NEW" novel in the latest Ace Double has all the clanking apparatus of the stories popular in the 1930s and a plot just about as dated. It deals with nasty alien invaders trying to keep Terrans from "The Space Sea;" with intelligent robots; with E. E. Smith-type mind powers; and with many other standard space opera concepts. And yet — the darn thing has vitality!

Miss Brackett's unnecessarily retitled tale is, as I said in my original review in 1953, a pleasant time-passer.

TIMELINER by Charles Eric Maine. Rinehart & Co., $2.75

THIS IS without doubt one of the most inconsequential science fiction novels ever written. It tells of a man who passes from body to body around the whole circular matrix of time, back to where he started, but with all the excitement of suburban commuting. Lover kills wife's husband by "speeding up" time machine; story ends when husband winds up in his *wife's* body!

Unrecommendable.

—GROFF CONKLIN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

End as a World

By F. L. WALLACE

Prophets aplenty foretold the end — but not one ever guessed just how it would come about!

EVERY PAPER said so in all the languages there were, I guess. I kept reading them, but didn't know what to believe. I know what I wanted to think, but that's different from actually knowing.

There was the usual news just after Labor Day. The Dodgers were winning or losing, I forget which, and UCLA was strong and was going to beat everybody they met that fall. An H-bomb had been tested in the Pacific, blowing another island off the map, just as if we had islands to spare. Ordinarily this was important, but now it wasn't. They put stuff like this in the back pages and hardly anybody reads it. There was only one thing on the front pages and it was all people talked about. All I talked about, anyway.

It began long before. I don't know how long because they didn't print that. But it began

Illustrated by DIEHL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and there it was, right upon us that day. It was Saturday. Big things always seem to happen on Saturdays. I ate breakfast and got out early. I had the usual things to do, mowing the lawn, for instance. I didn't do it nor anything else and nobody said anything. There wasn't any use in mowing the lawn on a day like that.

I went out, remembering not to slam the door. It wasn't much, but it showed thoughtfulness. I went past the church and looked at the sign that was set diagonally at the corner so that it could be read from both streets. There it was in big letters, quoting from the papers: THIS IS THE DAY THE WORLD ENDS! Some smart reporter had thought it up and it seemed so true that that was the only way it was ever said. Me? I didn't know.

IT WAS A bright day. People were out walking or just standing and looking at the sky. It was too early to look up. I went on. Paul Eberhard was sitting on the lawn when I came along. He tossed me the football and I caught it and tried to spin it on my finger. It didn't spin. It fell and flopped out with crazy bounces into the street. The milk truck stopped, while I got it out of the way. I tossed the football back to Paul. He put his hand on it and sat there.

"What'll we do?" he said.

I made a motion with my hands. "We can throw the ball around," I said.

"Naw," he said. "Maybe you've got some comic books."

"You've seen them all," I said. "You got some?"

"I gave them to Howie," he said, thoughtfully screwing the point of the ball into the center of a dandelion. "He said he was going to get some new ones though. Let's go see." He got up and tossed the ball toward the porch. It hit the railing and bounced back into the bushes. That's where he usually kept it.

"Paul," called his mother as we started out.

"Yeah?"

"Don't go far. I've got some things I want you to do."

"What?" he said patiently.

"Hauling trash out of the basement. Helping me move some of the potted plants around in front."

"Sure," he said. "I'll be back."

We went past another church on the way to Howie's. The sign was the same there. THIS IS THE DAY THE WORLD ENDS! They never said more than that. They wanted it to hang in our minds, something we couldn't quite touch, but we knew was there.

Paul jerked his head at the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sign. "What do you think of it?"

"I don't know." I broke off a twig as we passed a tree. "What about you?"

"We got it coming." He looked at the sky.

"Yeah, but will we get it?"

He didn't answer that. "I wonder if it will be bright?"

"It is now."

"It might cloud over."

"It won't matter. It'll split the sky." That was one thing sure. Clouds or anything weren't going to stand in the way.

We went on and found Howie. Howie is a Negro, smaller than we are and twice as fast. He can throw a football farther and straighter than anyone else on the team. We pal around quite a bit, especially in the football season.

He came out of the house like he was walking on whipped cream. I didn't let that fool me. More than once I've tried to tackle him during a practice game. Howie was carrying a model of a rocket ship, CO_2 powered. It didn't work. We said hi all around and then he suggested a game of keep-away. We'd left the football at Paul's and we couldn't so we walked over to the park.

WE SAT DOWN and began talking about it. "I'm wondering if it will really come," said Paul. We all squinted up.

"Where'll the President watch it from?" I said. "He should have a good view from the White House."

"No better than us right here," said Howie.

"What about Australia? Will they see it there?" I said.

"They'll see it all over."

"Africa, too? And what about the Eskimos?"

"It doesn't matter whether they actually see it or not. It will come to everyone at the same time."

I didn't see how it could, but I didn't feel like an argument. That's what they were saying on TV and you can't talk back to that.

"Everybody," said Howie. "Not just in this town, but all over. Wherever there are people. Even where they're not."

"You read that," said Paul.

"Sure," said Howie. "You lent me the comic books. It's even in them."

We didn't say much after that. I kept thinking of the man who made the H-bomb. I bet he felt silly and spiteful, blowing up an island. Somebody might have wanted to live on it, if he'd just left it there. He must have felt mean and low when something really big like this came along.

We talked on for a while, but we'd talked it out long ago. There

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was really nothing new we could say. Every so often we'd look up at the sky, but it wasn't going to come until it got here.

Finally we drifted apart. There wasn't anything left to do. We walked home with Howie and then I went with Paul, leaving him to come back to my house. I looked at the lawn and without thinking about it got busy and mowed it. I surprised myself.

It was hot, or it seemed to me it was. I went in to eat. Ma came by and shut off the sound of TV. I could still see the picture in the other room. The announcer was making faces, but, of course, I didn't hear what he said. He looked pretty funny, I thought. I thought we were all probably pretty funny, moving our mouths and blinking our eyes and waving our hands. Only nothing real was coming out. Not yet, anyway.

"Sit still," said Ma. "It will happen without your help. It's going to be all right."

"Think so?" I said. She would have told me anything to keep me quiet. She gets nervous when I fidget.

"I think so," she said, giving me my allowance. It was early for that. Usually I didn't get it until after supper. "Why don't you run uptown and watch it from there?"

"Maybe I will," I said, dabbling my hands in the water at the sink. "Are you going to go?"

"Of course I'm not. Why should I get into that mob? I can watch it just as well from here."

Sure she could. But it was not the same. Everybody I knew was going to be there. I changed shirts before I left. I took a rag and wiped the dust from my shoes. I wasn't trying to be fussy or dressed up or anything. I just thought I should do it.

THERE was shade and sun on the streets and a few big clouds in the sky.

A car slowed up and stopped beside me. The window rolled down and Jack Goodwin leaned toward me. "Going uptown?"

"Yeah."

"Want a lift?"

"Sure." Actually I didn't. I'd rather have walked, looking around as I went.

Jack Goodwin grinned as I got in. He's got gray hair, where he has hair. The rest is bald. He looked me over. "I don't see any comets on your shoulders," he said gravely.

"I never had any," I said. Some people seem to think everyone under seventeen is a kid.

"You'll be needing them," he said.

"Maybe," I said. I ought to have walked.

I never knew how slow a day could pass. I suppose I should

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have slept late and kept busy doing something. This was worse than putting on a uniform and waiting until gametime. At least there was a coach on the field to tell you what to do as you ran through the drill.

Jack Goodwin stopped at a light. I had a notion to get out. But I didn't. Goodwin grinned again as the light changed and we started up. "I don't blame you for being edgy," he said. "It's the suspense. If we only had some way of knowing for sure, radio maybe."

"There's no radio," I said. "The calculations have been checked."

"Sure, but maybe there's something we forgot. Or don't know. All sorts of things can go wrong."

He must have talked on and on, but I didn't listen. Howie and me and Paul had gone over everything he was saying.

"Thanks," I said as he stopped and I got out.

"Don't mention it," he said. He nearly scraped the rear fender of the car as he drove off. It was a new car, too. He wasn't so bad. Maybe he was just worried.

I wandered to the newsstand and looked at magazines and pocketbooks. Old lady Simpson didn't ask me if I was going to buy and didn't chase me away. She was busy arguing with some customers. Even so it was the first time she didn't pay attention to me when I came in. I had a good chance to look at things I never buy. There was nothing in them I wanted to see. I was thirsty. I had a coke and was still thirsty. I asked for a glass of water, drank half of it and went out.

DOWN THE street there was a TV set in a store window. I watched it. They were showing a street in India, people looking up. They flashed all around, to Italy, China, Brazil. Except for their clothes, it wasn't much different from here. They were all looking up.

I did the same. For the first time I noticed there was a slight overcast. Big billowing clouds had passed, but this was worse. I hoped it would clear away in time. Not that it really mattered.

It was more crowded than usual for Saturday, but at the same time it was quiet. People were shopping, but they weren't really buying much or else they bought it faster. Nobody wanted to miss it. They all seemed to have one eye on their lists and another on the clock.

Howie and Paul came up the street and we nodded and said something. A few other boys from the school passed by and we stopped. We gathered together. It was getting closer — and the space between the minutes was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

growing longer and longer.

I looked at Paul's watch. He said it was on the minute. I decided there was time to go in and get a candy bar. All of a sudden I was hungry. I didn't know where it came from. I'd had to stuff down lunch not long ago. And now I was hungry.

I went to a store and had to fight my way in. People were coming out. Not just customers, but the clerks and owner, too. There was a big television screen inside, but nobody wanted to see it on that. They wanted to be outside where it would happen to them. Not just see it, have it happen. The store was empty. Not closed — empty.

I turned and rushed out to join the others. I couldn't miss it. There were still minutes to go, but suppose there *had* been a miscalculation. I knew what that would mean, but even so I had to be there. I would almost die, too.

Now we were all looking up — all over the world people were, I suppose. It was quiet. You could hear them breathing.

And then it came, a flash across the sky, a silver streak, the biggest vapor trail there ever was. It went from this side to that side in no time. It split the sky and was gone before the shock blast hit us. Nobody said anything. We stood there and shivered and straightened up after the rumbling sound passed.

But there was the vapor trail that stretched farther than anyone could see. It would go around the world at least once before it came to an end somewhere in the desert. I saw my science teacher — he was trying to smile, but couldn't. And then there was the pharmacist who had wanted to be a research chemist, but wasn't good enough.

In front of me, old Fred Butler who drives the bus to Orange Point and King City cracked his knuckles. "He did it," he whispered. "All the way to Mars and back. Safe and right on schedule." He jumped up in the air and kept jumping up. He hadn't been that high off the ground in several years. He never would be again unless he took an elevator. And I knew he hated elevators.

Factory whistles started blowing. They sounded louder than Gabriel. I wonder if he heard them. I grabbed hold of the nearest person and started hugging. I didn't know it was the snooty girl from the next block until she hugged back and began kissing me. We yelled louder than the factory whistles. We had a right.

It was just like the papers said: This was the day the world ended —

And the Universe began.

—F. L. WALLACE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SYNOPSIS

I AM THOMAS WILLS, *and I am a traitor. All my life I was brought up to believe in the absolute perfection of* THE COMPANY, *the giant combine of insurance corporations which runs the world; but I have betrayed them and joined their*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PREFERRED RISK

CONCLUSION

By EDSON McCANN

Armageddon came — and the will of the human race was probated in one day — but who were the heirs that were left to collect?

Illustrated by KOSSIN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enemies. It all began when I was transferred to war-racked Naples and met a girl named —

RENA DELL'ANGELA, *who, with her father Benedetto and another outcast named Slovetski, leads a subversive underground movement which works against the Company. They plot to destroy it; but the Company has perhaps an even more dangerous opponent in the person of a strange man named —*

ZORCHI, *who makes his career of collecting on accident claims from the Company. There is no fraud involved; when he collects for the loss of a limb, the limb is indeed lost — but Zorchi, mysteriously, can regrow a severed member like a starfish! Both Zorchi and Rena's father are committed to —*

THE CLINICS, *the Company's suspended-animation vaults where, so says the Company, persons suffering from incurable diseases can tenderly be laid away until medical science can devise a cure. But Rena convinces me that the Company's statement is a lie; together, we rescue Zorchi and her father and flee.*

UNDERWRITER DEFOE, *a high executive of the Company, is our implacable enemy — and yet he was once my friend. But I believe that it is he who has perverted the all-good Company into a cynical and corrupt power combine — certainly Millen Carmody, his superior, is an honest man! Yet Defoe seems not to be under Carmody's control. I am swept under by these conflicting currents, but one thing emerges: Something must be done! For the underground has managed to get a cobalt-bomb which can depopulate the entire world!*

Right or wrong, I had no choice. I could not stand by and see the world destroyed for the sake of destroying the Company, however corrupt. I turned full circle; I betrayed the plans of the underground to Defoe —

In vain. The C-bomb went off; the end of the world was at hand.

XIV

THE HOTEL was not safe, of course, but what place was when the world was at an end? Rena and I, between us, got her father, Benedetto, upstairs into her room without attracting too much attention. We put him on the bed and peeled back his jacket.

The bullet had gone into his shoulder, a few inches above the heart. The bone was splintered, but the bleeding was not too much. Rena did what she could and, for the first time in what seemed like years, we had a moment's breathing space.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I said, "I'll phone for a doctor."

Benedetto said faintly, "No, Thomas! The Company!"

I protested, "What's the difference? We're all dead, now. You've seen —" I hesitated and changed it. "Slovetski has seen to that. There was *cobalt* in that bomb."

He peered curiously at me. "Slovetski? Did you suppose it was Slovetski who planned it so?" He shook his head — and winced at the pain. He whispered, "Thomas, you do not understand. It was my project, not Slovetski's. That one, he proposed to destroy the Company's Home Office; it was his thought that killing them would bring an end to evil. I persuaded him there was no need to kill — only to gamble."

I stared at him. "You're delirious!"

"Oh, no." He shook his head and succeeded in a tiny smile. "Do you not see it, Thomas? The great explosion goes off, the world is showered with particles of death. And then — what then?"

"We die!"

"Die? No! Have you forgotten the vaults of the clinics?"

It staggered me. I'd been reciting all the pat phrases from early schooling about the bomb! If it had gone off in the Short War, of course, it would have ended the human race! But I'd been a fool.

The vaults had been built to handle the extreme emergencies that couldn't be foreseen — even one that knocked out nearly the whole race. They hadn't expected that a cobalt-cased bomb would ever be used. Only the conspirators would have tried, and how could they get fissionables? But they were ready for even that. I'd been expecting universal doom.

"The clinics," Benedetto repeated as I stared at him.

IT WAS THE answer. Even radio-poisons of cobalt do not live forever. Five years, and nearly half of them would be gone; eleven years, and more than three-quarters would be dissipated. In fifty years, the residual activity would be down to a fraction of one per cent — and the human race could come back to the surface.

"But why?" I demanded. "Suppose the Company can handle the population of the whole world? Granted, they've space enough and one year is the same as fifty when you're on ice. But what's the use?"

He smiled faintly. "Bankruptcy, Thomas," he whispered. "So you see, we do not wish to fall into the Company's hands right now. For there is a chance that we will live . . . and perhaps the very faintest of chances that we will win!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IT WASN'T even a faint chance — I kept telling myself that.

But, if anything could hurt the Company, the area in which it was vulnerable was money. Benedetto had been intelligent in that. Bombing the Home Office would have been an inconvenience, no more. But to disrupt the world's work with a fifty-year hiatus, while the air purged itself of the radioactive cobalt from the bomb, would mean fifty years while the Company lay dormant; fifty years while the policies ran their course and became due.

For that was the wonder of Benedetto's scheme: *The Company insured against everything.* If a man were to be exposed to radiation and needed to be put away, he automatically went on "disability" benefits, while his policy paid its own premiums!

Multiply this single man by nearly four billion. The sum came out to a bankrupt Company.

It seemed a thin thread with which to strangle a monster. And yet, I thought of the picture of Millen Carmody in my Adjuster's Manual. There was the embodiment of honor. Where a Defoe might cut through the legalities and flout the letter of the agreements, Carmody would be bound by his given word. The question, then, was whether Defoe would dare to act against Carmody.

Everything else made sense. Even exploding the bomb high over the Atlantic: It would be days before the first fall-out came wind-borne to the land, and in those days there would be time for the beginnings of the mass migration to the vaults.

Wait and see, I told myself. Wait and see. It was flimsy, but it was hope, and I had thought all hope was dead.

We could not stay in the hotel, and there was only one place for us to go. Slovetski captured, the Company after our scalps, the whole world about to be plunged into confusion — we had to get out of sight.

IT TOOK TIME. Zorchi's hospital gave me a clue; I tracked it down and located the secretary.

The secretary spat at me over the phone and hung up, but the second time I called him he grudgingly consented to give me another number to call. The new number was Zorchi's lawyer. The lawyer was opaque and uncommunicative, but proposed that I call him back in a quarter of an hour. In a quarter of an hour, I was on the phone. He said guardedly: "What was left in Bay 100?"

"A hypodermic and a bottle of fluid," I said promptly.

"That checks," he confirmed, and gave me a number.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And on the other end of that number I reached Zorchi.

"The junior assassin," he sneered. "And calling for help? How is that possible, Weels? Did my *avocatto* lie?"

I said stiffly, "If you don't want to help me, say so."

"Oh —" he shrugged. "I have not said that. What do you want?"

"Food, a doctor, and a place for three of us to hide for a while."

He pursed his lips. "To hide, is it?" He frowned. "That is very grave, Weels. Why should I hide you from what is undoubtedly your just punishment?"

"Because," I said steadily, "I have a telephone number. Which can be traced. Defoe doesn't know you've escaped, but that can be fixed!"

He laughed angrily. "Oh-ho. The assassin turns to blackmail, is that it?"

I said furiously, "Damn you, Zorchi, you know I won't turn you in. I only point out that I can — and that I will not. Now, will you help us or not?"

He said mildly, "Oh, of course. I only wished you to say 'please' — but it is not a trick you Company men are good at. Signore, believe me, I perish with loneliness for you and your two friends, whoever they may be. Listen to me, now." He gave me an address and directions for finding it. And he hung up.

Zorchi's house was far outside the city, along the road to New Caserta. It lay at the bend of the main highway, and I suppose I could have passed it a hundred thousand times without looking inside, it was so clearly the white-stuccoed, large but crumbling home of a mildly prosperous peasant. It was large enough to have a central court partly concealed from the road.

The secretary, spectacles and all, met us at the door — and that was a shock. "You must have roller skates," I told him.

He shrugged. "My employer is too forgiving," he said, with ice on his voice. "I had hoped to reach him before he made an error. As you see, I was too late."

We lifted Benedetto off the seat; he was just barely conscious by now, and his face was ivory under the Mediterranean tan. I shook the secretary off and held Benedetto carefully in my arms as Rena held the door before me.

The secretary said, "A moment. I presume the car is stolen. You must dispose of it at once."

I snarled over my shoulder, "It isn't stolen, but the people that own it will be looking for it all right. *You* get rid of it."

He spluttered and squirmed, but I saw him climbing into the seat as I went inside. Zorchi was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there waiting, in a fancy motorized wheelchair. He had legs! Apparently they were not fully developed as yet, but in the short few days since I had rescued him *something* had grown that looked like nearly normal limbs. He had also grown, in that short time, a heavy beard.

The sneer, however, was the same.

I made the error of saying, "Signore Zorchi, will you call a doctor for this man?"

The thick lips writhed under the beard. "*Signore* it is now, is it? No longer the freak Zorchi, the case Zorchi, the half-man? God works many miracles, Weels. See the greatest of them all — it has transmuted the dog into a *signore!*"

I grated, "For God's sake, Zorchi, call a doctor!"

He said coldly, "You mentioned this over the phone, did you not? If you would merely walk on instead of bickering, you would find the doctor already here."

PLASMA and antibiotics: They flowed into Benedetto from half a dozen plastic tubes like oil into the hold of a tanker. And I could see, in the moments when I watched, the color come back into his face, and the sunken eyes seem to come back to life.

The doctor gave him a sedative that made him sleep, and explained to us that Benedetto was an old man for such goings-on. But if he could be kept still for three or four weeks, the doctor said, counting the lire Zorchi's secretary paid him, there was no great danger.

If he could be kept still for three or four weeks. In scarcely ten days, the atmosphere of the planet would be death to breathe! Many things might happen to Benedetto in that time, but remaining still was not one of them.

Zorchi retired to his own quarters, once the doctor was gone, and Rena and I left Benedetto to sleep.

We found a television set and turned it on, listening for word of the cobalt-bomb. We got recorded *canzoni* sung by a reedy tenor. We dialed, and found the Neapolitan equivalent of a soap opera, complete with the wise, fat old mother and the sobbing new daughter-in-law. It was like that on all the stations, while Rena and I stared at each other in disbelief.

Finally, at the regular hourly newscast, we got a flicker: "An unidentified explosion," the announcer was saying, "far out at sea, caused alarm to many persons last night. Although the origins are not known, it is thought that there is no danger. However, there has been temporary dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turbance to all long-lines communications, and air travel is grounded while the explosion is being investigated."

We switched to the radio: it was true. Only the UHF television bands were on the air.

I said, "I can't figure that. If there's enough disturbance to ruin long-distance transmission, it ought to show up on the television."

Rena said doubtfully, "I do not remember for sure, Tom, but is there not something about television which limits its distance?"

"Well — I suppose so, yes. It's a line of sight transmission, on these frequencies at any rate. I don't suppose it has to be, except that all the television bands fall in VHF or UHF channels."

"Yes. And then, is it not possible that only the distance transmission is interrupted? On purpose, I mean?"

I slammed my hand on the arm of the chair. "On purpose! The Company — they are trying to keep this thing localized. But the idiots, don't they know that's impossible? Does Defoe think he can let the world burn up without doing anything to stop it — just by keeping the people from knowing what happened?"

She shrugged. "I don't know, Tom."

I didn't know either, but I suspected — and so did she. It was out of the question that the Company, with its infinite resources, its nerve-fibers running into every part of the world, should not know just what that bomb was, and what it would do. And what few days the world had — before the fall-out became dangerous — were none too many.

Already the word should have been spread, and the first groups alerted for movement into the vaults, to wait out the day when the air would be pure again. If it was being delayed, there could be no good reason for it.

THE ONLY reason was Defoe. But what, I asked myself miserably, was Millen Carmody doing all this while? Was he going to sit back and placidly permit Defoe to pervert every ideal of the Company?

I could not believe it. It was not possible that the man who had written the inspiring words in the Handbook could be guilty of genocide.

Rena excused herself to look in on her father. Almost ashamed of myself, I took the battered book from my pocket and opened it to check on Millen Carmody's own preface.

It was hard to reconcile the immensely reassuring words with what I had seen. And, as I read them, I no longer felt safe and comforted.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THERE seemed to be no immediate danger, and Rena needed to get out of that house. There was nothing for Benedetto to do but wait, and Zorchi's servants could help him when it was necessary.

I took her by the arm and we strolled out into the garden, breathing deeply. That was a mistake. I had forgotten, in the inconspicuous air conditioning of Zorchi's home, that we were in the center of the hemp fields that had nearly cost me my dinner, so long ago, with Hammond. I wondered if I ever would know just why Hammond was killed. Playing both ends against the middle, it seemed — he had undoubtedly been in with Slovetski's group. Rena had admitted as much, and I was privately certain that he had been killed by them.

But of more importance was the stench in our nostrils. "Perhaps," said Rena, "across the road, in the walnut grove, it will not be as bad."

I hesitated, but it felt safe in the warm Italian night, and so we tried it. The sharp scent of the walnut trees helped a little; what helped even more was that the turbinates of the nostril can stand just so much, and when their tolerance is exceeded they surrender. So that it wasn't too long before, though the stench was as strong as ever, we hardly noticed it.

We sat against the thick trunk of a tree, and Rena's head fitted naturally against my shoulder. She was silent for a time, and so was I — it seemed good to have silence, after violent struggle and death.

Then she said: "Strange man."

"Me?"

"No. Oh, yes, Tom, if it comes to that, you, too. But I was thinking just now of Zorchi. Is it true, what you told me of his growing legs and arms so freely?"

"I thought everyone in Naples knew that. I thought he was a national hero."

"Of course, but I have never really known that the stories were *true*. How does it happen, Tom?"

I shrugged. "Heaven knows, I don't. I doubt if even Zorchi knows. His parents might have been involved in some sort of atomic business and got radiated, and so they produced a mutation. It's perfectly possible, you know."

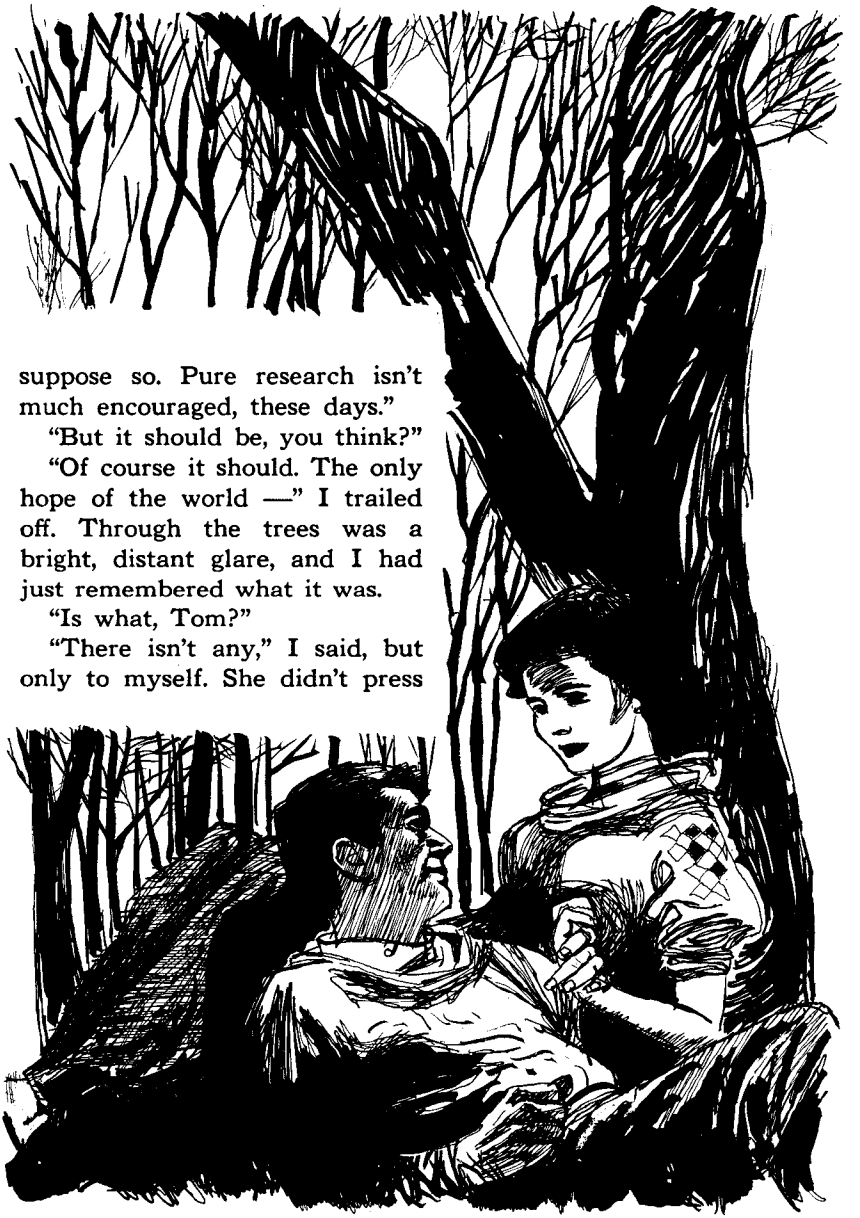
"I have heard so, Tom."

"Or else it just happened. Something in his diet, in the way his glands responded to a sickness, some sort of medicine. No one knows."

"Cannot scientists hope to tell?"

"Well —" it was beginning to sound like the seeds of one of our old arguments — "well, I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



suppose so. Pure research isn't much encouraged, these days."

"But it should be, you think?"

"Of course it should. The only hope of the world —" I trailed off. Through the trees was a bright, distant glare, and I had just remembered what it was.

"Is what, Tom?"

"There isn't any," I said, but only to myself. She didn't press

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me; she merely burrowed into my arm.

Perhaps the wind shifted, and the smell of the hemp fields grew stronger; perhaps it was only the foul thought that the glaring sky had triggered that contaminated my mood. But where I had been happy and relaxed — the C-bomb completely out of my mind for the moment — now I was too fully aware of what was ahead for all of us.

"Let's go back, Rena," I said. She didn't ask why. Perhaps she, too, was feeling the weight of our death sentence.

WE CAUGHT the evening newscast; its story varied little from the early ones.

Benedetto still slept, but Zorchi joined us as we watched it.

The announcer, face stamped with the careful blend of gravity and confidence that marks telecasters all over the world, was saying: "Late word on the bomb exploded over the North Atlantic indicates that there is some danger that radioactive ash may be carried to this area. The danger zones are now being mapped and surveyed, and residents of all such sections will be evacuated or placed in deep sleep until the danger is over.

"Blue Bolt policies give you complete protection against all hazards from this explosion. I repeat, Blue Bolt policies give you complete protection against all hazards from this explosion. Check your policies and be sure of your status. There is absolutely no risk for any person carrying the basic Blue Bolt minimum coverage or better."

I clicked off the set. "I wonder what the people in Shanghai are hearing tonight," I said.

Zorchi had only listened without comment, when I told him about the bomb that afternoon; he listened without comment now.

Rena said: "Tom, I've been wondering. You know, I — I don't have any insurance. Neither has my father, since we were canceled. And we're not the only ones without it, either."

I patted her hand. "We'll straighten this out," I promised. "You'll get your coverage back."

She gave me a skeptical look, but shook her head. "I don't mean just about father and me. What about all of the uninsurables, all over the world? The bomb goes off, and everybody with a policy files down into the vaults, but what about the others?"

I explained, "There are provisions for them. Some of them can be cared for under the dependency-clauses in the policies of their next of kin. Others have various charitable arrangements

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

— some localities, for instance, carry blanket floater policies for their paupers and prisoners and so on. And — well, I don't suppose it would ever come to that, but if someone turned up who had no coverage at all, he could be cared for out of the loss-pool that the Company carries for such contingencies. It wouldn't be luxurious, but he'd live.

"YOU SEE," I went on, warming to my subject, "the Company is set up so the actual premiums paid are meaningless. The whole objective of the Company is service; the premiums are only a way to that goal. The Company has no interest other than the good of the world, and —"

I stopped, feeling like a fool. Zorchi was laughing raucously.

I said resentfully, "I guess I asked for that, Zorchi. Well, perhaps what I said sounds funny. But, before God, Zorchi, that's the way the Company is set up. Here —" I picked the Handbook from the end-table beside me and tossed it to him — "read what Millen Carmody says. I won't try to convince you. Just read it."

He caught it expertly and dropped it on the floor before him. "So much for your Chief Assassin," he remarked pleasantly. "The words are no doubt honied, Weels, but I am not at this moment interested to read them."

I shrugged. It was peculiar how even a reasonable man — I have always thought of myself as a reasonable man — could make a fool of himself. It was no sin that habit had betrayed me into exalting the Company; but it was, at the least, quite silly of me to take offense when my audience disagreed with me.

I said, in what must have been a surly tone, "I don't suppose you are — why should you? You hate the Company from the word go."

He shook his head mildly. "I? No, Weels. Believe me, I am the Company's most devoted friend. Without it, how would I feed my five-times-a-day appetite?"

I sneered at him. "If you're a friend to the Company, then my best buddy is a tapeworm."

"Meaning that Zorchi is a parasite?" His eyes were furious. "Weels, you impose on me too far! Be careful! Is it the act of a tapeworm that I bleed and die, over and over? Is it something I chose, did I pray to the saints, before my mother spawned me, that I should be born a monster? No, Weels! We are alike, you gentlemen of the Company and I — we live on blood money, it is true. But the blood I live on, man — it is my own!"

I said mollifyingly, "Zorchi, I've had a hard day. I didn't mean

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be nasty. I apologize."

"Hah!"

"No, really."

HE SHRUGGED, abruptly quiet. "It is of no importance," he said. "If I wished to bear you a grudge, Weels, I would have more than that to give me cause." He sighed. "It all looked quite simple twenty-four hours ago, Weels. True, I had worked my little profession in this area as far as it might go — with your help, of course. But the world was before me — I had arranged to fly next week to the Parisian Anarch, to change my name and, perhaps within a month, with a new policy, suffer a severe accident that would provide me with francs for my hobbies. Why is it that you bring bad news always?"

I said, "Wasn't I of some little assistance to you at one time?"

"In helping me from the deep-freeze? Oh, yes, perhaps. But didn't you help me into it in the first place, as well? And surely you have already had sufficient credit for aiding my escape — I observe the young lady looking at you with the eyes of one who sees a hero."

I said in irritation, "You're infuriating, Zorchi. I suppose you know that. I never claimed any credit for helping you out of the clinic. As a matter of fact, I don't think I ever mentioned it. Everyone assumed that I had just happened to bring you along — no one questioned it."

He flared, "You let them *assume*, Weels? You let them assume that Zorchi was as helpless a side of pork as those other dead ones — you let them guess that you stuck me with a needle, so that it would seem how brave you were? Is it not true that I had revived by myself, Weels?"

I felt myself growing angry. "Of course! But I just didn't see any reason to —"

"To divide the credit, is that it, Weels? No, say no more; I have closed the subject. However, I point out that there is a difference between the rescue of a helpless hulk and the mere casual assistance one may be invited to give to a Zorchi."

I let it go at that. There was no point in arguing with that man, ever.

So I left the room — ostensibly to look in on Benedetto, actually to cool off a little. Benedetto seemed fine — that is, the dressings were still in place, he had not moved, his breath and pulse were slow and regular. I took my time before I went back to the room where Zorchi still sat waiting.

He had taken advantage of the time to improve his mind. The man's curiosity was insatiable;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the more he denied it, the more it stuck out all over him. He had thrown the Handbook on the floor when I gave it to him, but as soon as I was out of sight he was leafing through it. He had it open on his lap, face down, as he faced me.

"Weels." There was, for once, no sardonic rasp to his voice. And his face, I saw, was bone-white. "Weels, permit me to be sure I understand you. It is your belief that this intelligent plan of seeding the world with poison to make it well will succeed, because you believe that a Signore Carmody will evict Defoe from power?"

I said, "Well, not exactly —"

"But almost exactly? That is, you require this Millen Carmody for your plan?"

"It wasn't *my* plan. But you're right about the other."

"Very good." He extended the Handbook to me. "There is here a picture which calls itself Millen Carmody. Is that the man?"

I glanced at the familiar warm eyes on the frontispiece. "That's right. Have you seen him?"

"I have, indeed." The shaggy beard was twitching — I did not know whether with laughter or the coming of tears. "I saw him not long ago, Weels. It was in what they call Bay 100 — you remember? He was in a little bag like the pasta one carries home from a store. He was quite sound asleep, Weels, in the shelf just below the one I woke up in."

XV

SO NOW AT last I knew why Millen Carmody had permitted Defoe to turn the Company into a prison cell for the world. He couldn't forbid it, because the dead can forbid nothing, and Carmody was sleeping with the dead. No wonder Defoe was so concerned with the Naples sector!

How long? How long had Carmody been quietly out of the way, while Defoe made his plans and took his steps, and someone in a little room somewhere confected "statements" with Millen Carmody's signature on them and "interviews" that involved only one man?

It could not have been less than five or six years, I thought, counting back to the time when Defoe's name first began to register with me as an ordinary citizen, before I had married his cousin. Six years. That was the date of the Prague-Vienna war. And the year following, Hanoi clashed with Cebu. And the year after that, Auckland and Adelaide.

What in God's name was Defoe's plan? Nothing as simple as putting Carmody out of the way so that he could loot the Company. No man could wish to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that rich! It was meaningless. . .

Defoe could be playing for only one thing — power.

But it didn't matter; all that mattered was that now I knew that Carmody was an enemy to Defoe. He was therefore an ally to Rena and to me, and we needed allies. But how might we get Carmody out of Bay 100?

There weren't any good answers, though Rena and I, with the help of grumbling comments from Zorchi, debated it until the morning light began to shine. Frontal assault on the clinic was ridiculous. Even a diversionary raid such as Rena had staged to try to rescue her father — only ten days before! — would hardly get us in through the triple-locked door of Bay 100. Even if Slovetski's movement had still been able to muster the strength to do it, which was not likely.

It was maddening. I had hidden the hypodermic Rena had brought in Bay 100 to get it out of the way. Undoubtedly it was there still — perhaps only a few yards from Millen Carmody. If fifty cubic centimeters of a watery purplish liquid could have been plucked from the little glass bottle and moved the mere inches to the veins of his arms, the problem would be solved — for he could open the door from inside as easily as Zorchi had, and certainly once he was that far we could manage to get him out.

But the thing was impossible, no matter how we looked at it.

I SUPPOSE I fell asleep sitting in that chair, because I woke up in it. It was in the middle of a crazy nightmare about an avenging angel with cobalt-blue eyes burning at me out of heaven; and I wanted to run from him, but I was frozen by a little man with a hypodermic of ice. I woke up, and I was facing the television set. Someone — Rena, I suppose — had covered me with a light spread. The set was blaring a strident tenor voice. Zorchi was hunched over, watching some opera; I might as well have been a thousand miles away.

I lay blearily watching the tiny figures flickering around the screen, not so much forgetting all the things that were on my mind as knowing what they were and that they existed, but lacking the strength to pick them up and look at them. The opera seemed to concern an Egyptian queen and a priest of some sort; I was not very interested in it, though it seemed odd that Zorchi should watch it so eagerly.

Perhaps, after all, there was something to his maudlin self-pity — perhaps I really did think of him as a monster or a dog, for I was as uneasy to see him watching an opera as I would have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been to see an ape play the flute.

I heard trucks going by on the highway. By and by it began to penetrate through the haze that I was hearing a *lot* of trucks going by on the highway. I had no idea how heavily traveled the Naples-Caserta road might be, but from the sound, they seemed nearly bumper to bumper, whizzing along at seventy or eighty miles an hour.

I got up stiffly and walked over to the window.

I had not been far wrong. There was a steady stream of traffic in both directions — not only trucks but buses and private cars, everything from late-model gyromaxions to ancient piston-driven farm trucks.

Zorchi heard me move, and turned toward me with a hooded expression. I pointed to the window.

"What's up?" I asked.

He said levelly, "The end of the world. It is now official; it has been on the television. Oh, they do not say it in just so many words, but it is there."

I turned to the television set and flicked off the tape-relay switch — apparently the opera had been recorded. Zorchi glared, but didn't try to stop me as I hunted on the broadcast bands for a news announcer.

I didn't have far to hunt. Every channel was the same: The Company was issuing orders and instructions. Every man, woman and child was to be ready within ten days for commitment to the clinic. . .

I tried to imagine the scenes of panic and turmoil that would be going on in downtown Naples at that moment.

THE NEWSCASTER was saying: "Remember, if your Basic Blue Bolt policy number begins with the letters A, B or C — if it begins with the letters A, B or C — you are to report to the local first aid or emergency post at six hundred hours tomorrow. There is no danger. I repeat, there is no danger. This is merely a precaution taken by the Company for your protection." He didn't really look as though there were no danger, however. He looked like a man confronted by a ghost.

I switched to another channel. An equally harried-looking announcer: "— reported by a team of four physicists from the Royal University to have produced a serious concentration of radioactive byproducts in the upper atmosphere. It is hoped that the cloud of dangerous gases will veer southward and pass harmlessly through the Eastern Mediterranean; however, strictly as a precautionary measure, it is essential that every person in this area be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

placed in a safety zone during the danger period, the peak of which is estimated to come within the next fourteen days. If there is any damage, it will be only local and confined to livestock — for which you will be reimbursed under your Blue Bolt coverage."

I switched to another channel. *Local* damage! Local to the face of the Earth!

I tried all the channels; they were all the same.

The Company had evidently decided to lie to the human race. Keep them in the dark — make each little section believe that only it was affected — persuade them that they would be under for, at most, a few weeks or months.

Was that, I wondered, Defoe's scheme? Was he planning to try somehow to convince four billion people that fifty years were only a few weeks? It would never work — the first astronomer to look at a star, the first seaman to discover impossible errors in his tide table, would spot the lie.

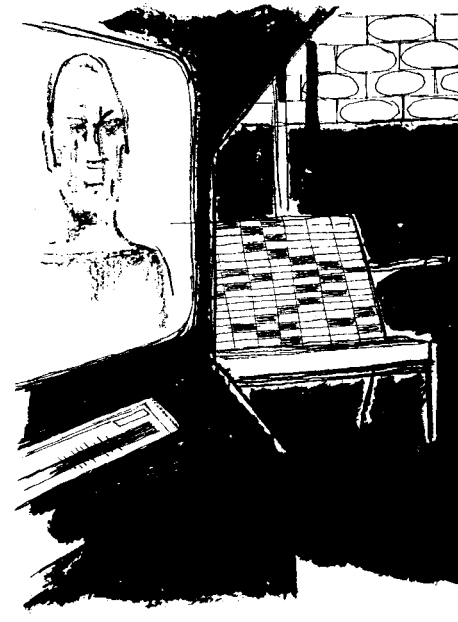
More likely he was simply proceeding along what must always have been his basic assumption: The truth is wasted on the people.

Zorchi said with heavy irony, "If my guest is quite finished with the instrument, perhaps he will be gracious enough to permit me to resume Aïda."

I WOKE RENA and told her about the evacuation. She said, yawning, "But of course, Tom. What else could they do?" And she began discussing breakfast.

I went with her, but not to eat; in the dining hall was a small television set, and on it I could listen to the same repeat broadcasts over and over to my heart's content. It was — in a way — a thrilling sight. It is always impressive to see a giant machine in operation, and there was no machine bigger than the Company.

The idea of suspending a whole world, even piecemeal, was stag-

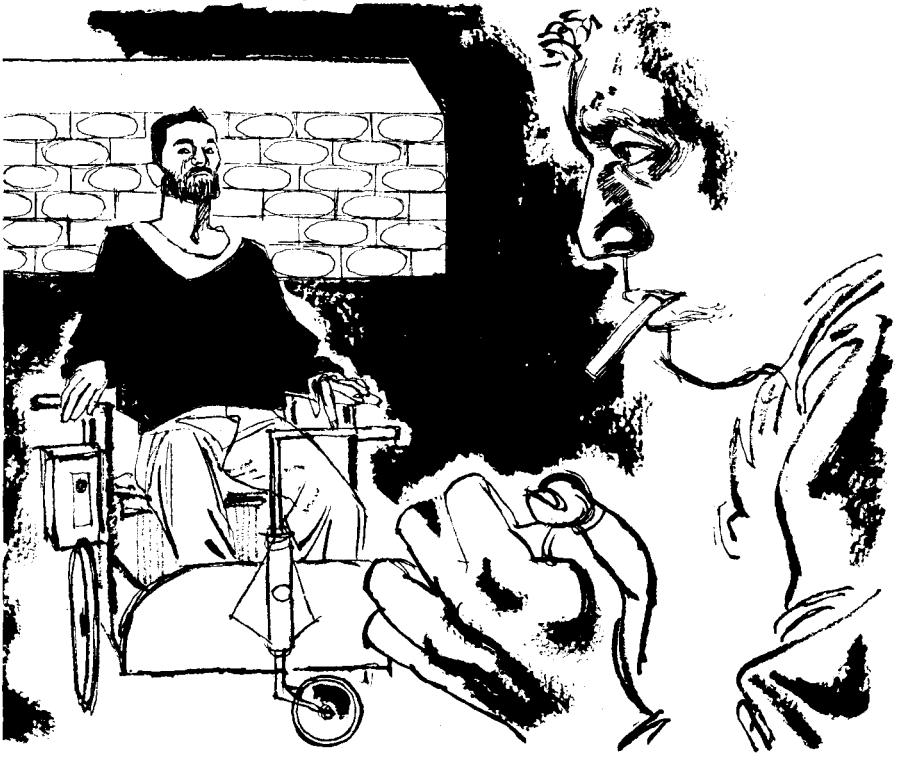


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gering. But if there had been panic at first in the offices of the Company, none of it showed. The announcers were harried and there was bustle and strain, but order presided.

Those long lines of vehicles outside the window; they were going somewhere; they were each one, I could see by the medallion slung across each radiator front, on the payroll of the Company.

Perhaps the trick of pretending to each section that only it would be affected was wise — I don't know. It was working, and I suppose that is the touchstone of wisdom. Naples knew that something was going on in Rome, of course, but was doubtful about the Milanese Republic. The Romans were in no doubt at all about Milan, but weren't sure about the Duchy of Monaco, down the Riviera shore. And the man on the street, if he gave it



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a thought at all, must have been sure that such faraway places as America and China were escaping entirely.

I suppose it was clever — there was no apparent panic. The trick took away the psychological horror of world catastrophe and replaced it with only a local terror, no different in kind than an earthquake or a flood. And there was always the sack of gold at the end of every catastrophe: Blue Bolt would pay for damage, with a free and uncounting hand.

Except that this time, of course, Blue Bolt would not, could not, pay at all.

BY NOON, Benedetto was out of bed.

He shouldn't have been, but he was conscious and we could not make him stay put — short of chains.

He watched the television and then listened as Rena and I brought him up to date. Like me, he was shocked and then encouraged to find that Millen Carmody was in the vaults — encouraged because it was at least a handle for us to grasp the problem with; if we could get at Carmody, perhaps we could break Defoe's usurped power. Without him, Defoe would simply use the years while the world slept to forge a permanent dictatorship.

We got the old man to lie down, and left him. But not for long. Within the hour he came tottering to where we were sitting, staring at the television. He waved aside Rena's quick protest.

"There is no time for rest, my daughter," he said. "Do not scold me. I have a task."

Rena said worriedly, "Dear, you *must* stay in bed. The doctor said —"

"The doctor," Benedetto said formally, "is a fool. Shall I allow us to die here? Am I an ancient idiot, or am I Benedetto dell'-Angela who with Slovetski led twenty thousand men?"

Rena said, "Please! You're sick!"

"Enough." Benedetto wavered, but stood erect. "I have telephoned. I have learned a great deal. The movement —" he leaned against the wall for support — "was not planned by fools. We knew there might be bad days; we do not collapse because a few of us are put out of service by the Company. I have certain emergency numbers to call; I call them. And I find —" he paused dramatically — "that there is news. Slovetski has escaped!"

I said, "That's impossible! Defoe wouldn't let him go!"

"Perhaps Slovetski did not consult him," Benedetto said with dignity. "At any rate, he is free and not far from here. And he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is the answer we have sought, you understand."

"How?" I demanded. "What can he do that we can't?"

Benedetto smiled indulgently, though the smile was strained. His wound must have been giving him hell; it had had just enough time to stiffen up. He said, "Leave that to Slovetski, Thomas. It is his métier, not yours. I shall go to him now."

Well, I did what I could; but Benedetto was an iron-necked old man. I forbade him to leave and he laughed at me. I begged him to stay and he thanked me — and refused. Finally I abandoned him to Rena and Zorchi.

Zorchi gave up almost at once. "A majestic man!" he said admiringly, as he rolled into the room where I was waiting, on his little power cart. "One cannot reason with him."

And Rena, in time, gave up, too. But not easily. She was weeping when she rejoined me.

SHE HAD been unable even to get him to let her join him, or to consider taking someone else with him; he said it was his job alone. She didn't even know where he was going. He had said it was not permissible, in so critical a situation, for him to tell where Slovetski was.

Zorchi coughed. "As to that," he said, "I have already taken the liberty of instructing one of my associates to be ready. If the Signore has gone to meet Slovetski, my man is following him. . ."

So we waited, while the television announcers grew more and more grim-lipped and imperative.

I listened with only half my mind. Part of my thoughts were with Benedetto, who should have been in a hospital instead of wandering around on some dangerous mission. And partly I was still filled with the spectacle that was unfolding before us.

It was not merely a matter of preserving human lives. It was almost as important to provide the newly awakened men and women, fifty years from now, with food to eat and the homes and tools and other things that would be needed.

Factories and transportation gear — according to the telecasts — were being shut down and sealed to stand up under the time that would pass — "weeks," according to the telecast, but who needed to seal a tool in oil for a few weeks? Instructions were coming hourly over the air on what should be protected in each home, and how it was to be done. Probably even fifty years would not seriously damage most of the world's equipment — if the plans we heard on the air could be efficiently carried out.

But the farms were another

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matter. The preserving of seeds was routine, but I couldn't help wondering what these flat Italian fields would look like in fifty untended years. Would the radio-cobalt sterilize even the weeds? I didn't think so, but I didn't know. If not, would the Italian peninsula once again find itself covered with the dense forests that Caesar had marched through, where Spartacus and his runaway slaves had lurked and struck out against the Senators?

And how many millions would die while the forests were being cleared off the face of the Earth again to make way for grain? Synthetic foods and food from the sea might solve that — the Company could find a way. But what about the mines — three, four and five thousand feet down — when the pumps were shut off and the underground water seeped in? What about the rails that the trains rode on? You could cosmoline the engines, perhaps, but how could you protect a million miles of track from the rains of fifty years?

So I sat there, watching the television and waiting. Rena was too nervous to stay in one place. Zorchi had mysterious occupations of his own. I sat and stared at the cathode screen.

Until the door opened behind me, and I turned to look.

Rena was standing there. Her face was an ivory mask. She clutched the door as her father had a few hours before; I think she looked weaker and sicker than he.

I said, for the first time, "Darling!" She stood silent, staring at me. I asked apprehensively, "What is it?"

The pale lips opened, but it was a moment before she could frame the words. Then her voice was hard to hear. "My father," she said. "He reached the place where he was meeting Slovetski, but the expediters were there before him. They shot him down in the street. And they are on their way here."

XVI

IT WAS QUICK and brutal. Somehow Benedetto had been betrayed; the expediters had known where he had come from. And that was the end of that.

They came swarming down on us in waves, at least a hundred of them, to capture a man, a girl and a cripple — Zorchi's servants had deserted us, melting into the hemp fields like roaches into a garbage dump. Zorchi had a little gun, a Beretta; he fired it once and wounded a man.

The rest was short and unpleasant.

They bound us and gagged us and flew us, trussed like game

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the spit, to the clinic. I caught a glimpse of milling mobs outside the long, low walls as we came down. Then all I could see was the roof of the copter garage.

We were brought to a tiny room where Defoe sat at a desk. The Underwriter was smiling. "Hello, Thomas," he said, his eyes studying the bruise on my cheek. He turned toward Rena considerингly. "So this is your choice, eh, Thomas?" He studied Rena coolly. "Hardly my type. Still, by sticking with me, you could have had a harem."

Bound as I was, I started forward. Something hit me in the back at my first step, driving a hot rush of agony up from my kidneys. Defoe watched me catch my breath without a change of expression.

"My men are quite alert, Thomas. Please do not try that again. Once is amusing, but twice would annoy me." He sighed. "I seem to have been wrong about you, Thomas. Perhaps because I needed someone's help, I overestimated you. I thought long ago that beneath your conditioning you had brains. Manning is a machine, good for taking orders. Dr. Lawton is loyal, but not intelligent. And between loyalty and intelligence, I'll take brains. Loyalty I can provide for myself." He nodded gravely at the armed expediters.

Zorchi spat. "Kill us, butcher," he ordered. "It is enough I die without listening to your foolish babbling."

Defoe considered him. "You interest me, Signore. A surprise, finding you revived and with Wills. Before we're finished, you must tell me about that."

I saw Zorchi bristle and open his mouth, but a cold, suddenly calculating idea made me interrupt. "To get dell'Angela out as an attendant, I needed a patient for him to wheel. Zorchi had money, and I *expected* gratitude when I revived him later. It wasn't hard getting Lawton's assistant to stack his cocoon near Benedetto's."

"Lawton!" Defoe grimaced, but seemed to accept the story. He smiled at me suddenly. "I had hopes for you, then. That escape was well done — simple, direct. A little crude, but a good beginning. You could have been my number one assistant, Thomas. I thought of that when I heard of the things you were saying after Marianna died — I thought you might be awaking."

I licked my lips. "And when you picked me up after Marianna's death, and bailed me out of jail, you made sure the expediter corps had information that I was possibly not reliable. You made sure the information reached the underground, so they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would approach me and I could spy for you. You wanted a patsy!"

The smile was gleaming this time. "Naturally, until you could prove yourself. And of course, I had you jailed for the things you said because I wanted it that way. A pity all my efforts were wasted on you, Thomas. I'm afraid you're not equipped to be a spy."

It took everything I had, but this time I managed to smile back. "On which side, Defoe? How many spies know you've got Millen Carmody down in Bay —"

That hit him. But I didn't have time to enjoy it. He made a sudden gesture, and the expediters moved. This time, when they dragged me down, it was very bad.

WHEN I came to, I was in another room. Zorchi and Rena were with me, but not Defoe. It was a preparation chamber, racked with instruments, furnished with surgical benches.

A telescreen was flickering and blaring unheeded at one end of the room. I caught a glimpse of scenes of men, women and children standing in line, going in orderly queues through the medical inspections, filing into the clinic and its local branch stations for the sleep drug. The scenes were all in Naples; but they must have been, with local variations, on every telescreen on the globe.

Dr. Lawton appeared. He commanded coldly: "Take your clothes off."

I think that was the most humiliating moment of all.

It was, of course, only a medical formality. I knew that the suspendees had to be nude in their racks. But the very impersonality of the proceeding made it ugly. Reluctantly I began to undress, as did Rena, silent and withdrawn, and Zorchi, sputtering anger and threats. My whole body was a mass of redness; in a few hours the red would turn to purple and black, where the hoses of the expediters had caressed me.

Or did a suspendee bruise? Probably not. But it was small satisfaction.

Lawton was looking smug; no doubt he had insisted on the privilege of putting us under himself after I'd blamed him for Zorchi's escape. I couldn't blame him; I would have returned the favor with great joy.

Well, I had wanted to reach Millen Carmody, and Defoe was granting my wish. We might even lie on adjacent racks in Bay 100. After what I'd told Defoe, we should rate such reserved space!

Lawton approached with the hypospray, and a pair of expediters grabbed my arms. He said:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I want to leave one thought with you, Wills. Maybe it will give you some comfort." His smirk told me that it certainly would not. "Only Defoe and I can open Bay 100," he reminded me. "I don't think either of us will; and I expect you will stay there a long, long time."

He experimentally squirted a faint mist from the tip of the hypospray and nodded satisfaction. He went on: "The suspension is effective for a long time — several hundred years, perhaps. But not forever. In time the enzymes of the body begin to digest the body itself." He pursed his lips thoughtfully. "I don't know if the sleeping brain knows it is pain or not. If it does, you'll know what it feels like to dissolve in your own gutwash. . ."

He smiled. "Good night," he crooned, and bent over my arm.

The spray from the end of the hypo felt chilly, but not at all painful. It was as though I had been touched with ice; the cold clung, and spread.

I was vaguely conscious of being dumped on one of the surgical tables, even more vaguely aware of seeing Rena slumping across another.

The light in the room yellowed, flickered and went out.

I thought I heard Rena's voice . . .

Then I heard nothing. And I saw nothing. And I felt nothing, except the penetrating cold, and then even the cold was gone.

XVII

MY NERVES throbbed with the prickling of an infinity of needles. I was cold — colder than I had ever been. And over everything else came the insistent, blurred voice of Luigi Zorchi.

"Weels! Weels!"

At first it was an annoyance. Then, abruptly, full consciousness came rushing back, bringing some measure of triumph with it. It had worked! My needling of Defoe and my concealing of Zorchi's ability to revive himself had succeeded in getting us all put into Bay 100, where the precious hypodermic and fluid were hidden. After being pushed from pillar to post and back, even that much success was enough to shock me into awareness.

My heart was thumping like a rusty cargo steamer in a high sea. My lungs ached for air and burned when they got it. But I managed to open my eyes to see Zorchi bending over me. Beyond him, I saw the blue-lighted sterilizing lamps, the door that opened from inside, and the racked suspendees of Bay 100.

"It is time! But now finally you awake, you move!" Zorchi grumbled. "The body of Zorchi

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does not surrender to poisons; it throws them off. But then because of these small weak legs, I must wait for you! Come, Weels, no more dallying! We have still work to do to escape this abomination!"

I sat up clumsily, but the drugs seemed to have been neutralized. I was on the bottom tier, and I managed to locate the floor with my legs and stand up. "Thanks, Zorchi," I told him, trying to avoid looking at his ugly, naked body and the things that were almost his legs.

"Thanks are due," he admitted. "I am a modest man who expects no praise, but I have done much. I cannot deny it. It took greatness to crawl through this bay to find you. On my hands and these baby knees, Weels, I crawled. Almost I am overcome with wonder at so heroic — But I digress. Weels, waste no more time in talking. We must revive the others who are above my reach. Then let us, for God, go and find food."

Somehow, though I was still weak, I managed to follow Zorchi and drag down the sacks containing Rena and Carmody. And while waiting for them to revive, I began to realize how little chance we would have to escape this time, naked and uncertain of what state affairs were in. I also realized what might happen if Lawton or Defoe decided to check up on Bay 100 now!

For the few minutes while Rena revived and recognized me, and while I explained how I'd figured it out, it was worth any risk. Then finally, Carmody stirred and sat up. Maybe we looked enough like devils in a blue hell to justify his first expression.

HE WASN'T much like my mental image of the great Millen Carmody. His face was like his picture, but it was an older face and haggard under the ugly light. Age was heavy on him, and he couldn't have been a noble figure at any time. Now he was a pot-bellied little man with scrawny legs and a faint tremble to his hands.

But there was no fat in his mind as he tried to absorb our explanations while he answered our questions in turn. He'd come to Naples, bringing his personal physician, Dr. Lawton. His last memory was of Lawton giving him a shot to relieve his indigestion.

It must have been rough to wake up here after that and find what a mess had been made of the world. But he took it, and his questions became sharper as he groped for the truth. Finally he sat back, nodding sickly. "Defoe!" he said bitterly. "Well, what do

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we do now, Mr. Wills?"

It shook me. I'd unconsciously expected him to take over at once. But the eyes of Rena and Zorchi also turned to me. Well, there wasn't much choice. We couldn't stay here and risk discovery. Nor could we hide anywhere in the clinic; when Defoe found us gone, no place would be safe.

"We pray," I decided. "And if prayers help, maybe we'll find some way out."

"I can help," Carmody offered. He grimaced. "I know this place and the combination to the private doors. Would it help if we reached the garage?"

I didn't know, but the garage was half a mile beyond the main entrance. If we could steal a car, we might make it. We had to try.

There were sounds of activity when we opened the door, but the section we were in seemed to be filled, and the storing of suspendees had moved elsewhere.

We shut and relocked the door and followed Carmody through the seemingly endless corridors, with Zorchi hobbling along, leaning on Rena and me and sweating in agony. We offered to carry him, but he would have none of that. We moved further and further back, while the sight of Carmody's round, bare bottom ahead ripped my feeling of awe for him into smaller and smaller shreds.

He stopped at a door I had almost missed and his fingers tapped out something on what looked like an ornamental pattern. The door opened to reveal stairs that led down two flights, winding around a small elevator shaft. At the bottom was a long corridor that must be the one leading underground to the garage. Opposite the elevator was another door, and Carmody worked its combination to reveal a storeroom, loaded with supplies the expediters might need.

He ripped a suit of the heavy gray coveralls off the wall and began donning them. "Radiation suits," he explained. They were ugly things, but better than nothing. Anyone seeing us in them might think we were on official business. Zorchi shook off our help and somehow got into a pair. Then he grunted and began pulling hard-pellet rifles and bandoliers of ammunition off the wall.

"NOW, WEELS, we are prepared. Let them come against us. Zorchi is ready!"

"Ready to kill yourself!" I said roughly. "Those things take practice!"

"And again I am the freak — the case who can do nothing that humans can do, eh, Weels?" He swore thickly, and there was something in his voice that abruptly roughened it. "Never

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Zorchi the man! There are Sicilians who would tell you different, could they open dead mouths to speak of their downed planes!"

"He was the best jet pilot Naples had," Rena said quietly.

It was my turn to curse. He was right; I hadn't thought of him as a man, or considered that he could do anything but regrow damaged tissues. "I'm sorry, Luigi!"

"No matter." He sighed, and then shrugged. "Come, take arms and ammunition and let us be out of this place. Even the nose of Zorchi can stand only so much of the smell of assassins!"

We moved down the passage, staggering along for what seemed to be hours, expecting every second to run into some official or expediter force. But apparently the passage wasn't being used much during the emergency. We finally reached stairs at the other end and headed up, afraid to attract attention by taking the waiting elevator.

At the top, Carmody frowned as he studied the side passages and doors. "Here, I guess," he decided. "This may still be a less used part of the garage." He reached for the door.

I stopped him. "Wait a minute. Is there any way back in, once we leave?"

"The combination will work — the master combination used by the Company heads. Otherwise, these doors are practically bomb-proof!" He pressed the combination and opened the door a crack.

Outside, I could see what seemed to be a small section of the Company car pool. There were sounds of trucks, but none were moving nearby. I saw a few men working on trucks a distance from us. Maybe luck was on our side.

I pointed to the nearest expediter patrol wagon — a small truck, really, enclosed except for the driver's seat. "That one, if there's fuel. We'll have to act as if we had a right to it, and hope for the best. Zorchi, can you manage it that far?"

"I shall walk like a born assassin," he assured me, but sweat began popping onto his forehead at what he was offering. Yet there was no sign of the agony he must have felt as he followed and managed to climb into the back with Rena and Carmody.

The fuel gauge was at the half mark and, as yet, there was no cry of alarm. I gunned the motor into life, watching the nearest workmen. They looked up casually, and then went back to their business. Ahead, I could see a clear lane toward the exit, with a few other trucks moving in and out. I headed for it, my hair prickling at the back of my neck.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WE REACHED the entrance, passed through it, and were soon blending into the stream of cars that were passing the clinic on their way out for more suspension cases.

The glass doors of the entrance were gone now, and workmen were putting up huge steel ones in their place, even while a steady stream of cases were hobbling or being carried into the clinic. Most of them were old or shabby, I noticed. The class-D type. The last ones to be admitted. We must have spent more time in the vault than I'd thought, and zero hour was drawing near.

Beyond the clinic, the whole of Anzio was a mass of abandoned cars that seemed to stretch for miles, and the few buildings not boarded up were obviously class-D dwellings, too poor to worry about. I cursed my way through a jam-up of trucks, and managed to find one of the side roads.

Then I pressed down on the throttle as far as I dared without attracting attention, until I could find a safe place to turn off with no other cars near to see me.

"Where to?" I asked. We couldn't go back to Zorchi's, since any expediter investigation would start there. Maybe we'd never be missed, but I couldn't risk it. If we had to, we could use some abandoned villa and hide out, but I was hoping for a better suggestion.

Zorchi looked blank, and Rena shrugged. "If we could only find Nikolas —" she suggested doubtfully.

I shook my head. I'd had a chance to think about that a little while the expediters took us to see Defoe, and I didn't like it. The leader of the revolution had apparently been captured by Defoe. According to Benedetto dell'Angela, he'd escaped. Yet Defoe hadn't tried to pump us about him. And when Benedetto set out to meet him, the expediters had descended at once.

It made an ugly picture. I had no wish to go looking for the man.

"There's my place," Carmody said finally. "I had places all over the world, kept ready for me and stocked. If Defoe let it be thought that I had retired, he must have kept them all up as I'd have done. Wait, let me orient myself. Up that road."

Places all over the world, with food that was wasted, and with servants who might never see their master! And I'd been brought up believing that the Underwriters were men of quiet, simple tastes! Carmody's clay feet were beginning to crumble up to the navel!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE VILLA was surrounded by trees, on a low hill that overlooked an artificial lake. It had been sealed off, but the combination lock yielded to Carmody's touch. There were beds made up and waiting, freezers stocked with food that sent Zorchi into ecstasy, and even a complete file of back issues of the Company paper. Carmody headed for those, with the look of a man hunting his lost past. He had a lot of catching up to do.

But it was the television set that interested me. It was still working, with taped material being broadcast. The appeal had been stepped up, asking for order and cooperation; I recognized the language as being pitched toward the lower classes now, though. And the clicking of a radiation-counter sounded as a constant background, with occasional shots of its meter, the needle well into the danger area.

Zorchi joined me and Rena, dribbling crumbs of meat down his beard. He snorted as he caught sight of the counter. "There is a real one in the other room, and it registers higher," he said. "It is interesting. For me, of no import. Doctors whom I trust have said Defoe is wrong; my body can resist damage from radiation — and perhaps even from old age. But for you and the young lady . . ."

He shut up at my expression, but the tape cut off and a live announcer came on before I could say anything. "A bulletin just in," he said, "shows that the government of Naples has unanimously passed a moritorium on all contracts, obligations and indebtedness for the duration of the emergency. The Company has just followed this with a declaration that it will extend the moritorium to include all crimes against the Company. During the emergency, the clinics will be available to all without prejudice, Director Defoe said today."

"A trap," Rena guessed. "We wouldn't have a chance, anyhow. But, Tom, does the other mean that —"

"It means your father was wrong," I answered. "As of right now — and probably in every government at the same time — the Company has been freed from any responsibility."

It didn't make any difference, of course. Benedetto had expected that everyone must secretly hate the Company as he did; he hadn't realized that men who have just been saved from the horrible danger of radiation death aren't going to turn against the agency that saved them. And damn it, the Company *was* saving them, after its opponents had risked annihilation of the race. Defoe would probably make sure

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the suspendees were awakened at a rate where he could keep absolute power, but not from any danger of bankruptcy.

CARMODY had come out and listened, attracted by the broadcast radiation clicking, apparently. Now he asked enough questions to discover Benedetto's idea, and shook his head.

"It wouldn't work," he agreed with me. "Even if I still had control, I couldn't permit such a thing. What good would it do? Could money payments make food for a revived world, Miss dell'Angela? Would bankrupting the only agency capable of rebuilding the Earth be a thing of honor? Besides, even with what I've read, I can see no hope. There's nothing we can do."

"But if you can arouse the other Underwriters against Defoe," she insisted, "at least you can prevent *his* type of world!"

He shook his head. "How? All communications are in his hands. Even if I could fly to the Home Office, most of the ones I could trust — and there apparently are a few Defoe hasn't been able to retire — would be scattered, out of my reach. A week ago, there might have been a chance. Now, it's impossible. Impossible."

He shook his head sadly and wandered back toward the library. I could see that in his secret thoughts, he was wishing we'd left him safely in the vault. Maybe it would have been just as well.

"Cheer up," I told Rena. "Carmody's an old man — too old to think in terms of direct action, even when it's necessary. Defoe doesn't own the world yet!"

But later, when I located the books I wanted in the library and went out into the vine-covered bower in the formal garden, I wasn't as confident as I'd pretended.

Thinking wasn't a pleasant job, after all the years when I'd let others do my thinking for me. But now I had to do it for myself. Otherwise, the only alternative was to plan some means of quick death for us all before the radiation got too intense. And I couldn't accept that.

Rena had managed something Marianna couldn't have conceived — she'd quietly relinquished her fate into my hands, gambling on me with everything she had. Whether I wanted to or not, I'd taken the responsibility. Carmody was an old man, one who hadn't been able to keep Defoe from taking over in the first place. And Zorchi — well, he was Zorchi.

That night, the radiation detector suddenly took a sharp lift, its needle crossing over into the red. It was probably only a local

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rise. But it didn't make my thinking any more comfortable.

IT WAS AT breakfast that next morning when I finally took it up with Carmody. "Just what will the situation be at the clinic after they close down? How many will be kept awake? And what about their defenses?"

He frowned, trying to see my idea. Then he shrugged. "Too many, Tom. We had plotted out a course for such things as this a number of times in Planning. And our mob psychologists warned that there'd inevitably be a few who for one reason or another wouldn't come in in time, but who would then grow desperate and try to break in. Outlaws, looters, procrastinators, fanatics. That sort. So for some time, there should be at least twenty guards kept alert. And that's enough to defend a clinic. Atomic cannon at every entrance, of course, and the clinics are bombproof."

"Twenty, eh? And how about Defoe and Lawton? Will they sleep?" It seemed logical that they couldn't stay out of suspension for the whole fifty years or so. There'd be no profit to gaining a world after they were too old to use it.

"Not at first. There's a great deal of final administrative work to be done. There's a chamber equipped to keep a hundred or so men awake with radiation washed from the air, and containing adequate supplies, in cable contact with other clinics. They'll be there. Later, they'll take shifts, with only a couple of men awake at a time, I suppose. They may age a little that way, but not much."

He frowned again, and then slowly nodded. "It could be done, if we had some way to wait safely for six months. Getting back in is no problem for me."

"It's going to be done," I told him. "And a lot sooner. Are you willing to take the chance?"

"Have I any choice?" He shrugged again. "Do you think I haven't been sick at the idea of a man like Defoe in command of the Company for as long as he lives? Tom, my family started the Company. I've got an obligation to restore it to its right course. If there's any chance of keeping Defoe from being emperor of the world, I've got to take it. If you can put me in a position where I can get the honest Underwriters together again, where we can set up the Company as it was —"

"Why? So this will happen all over again?"

He looked shocked at Rena's question. "I don't blame you for being bitter, Miss dell'Angela. But with Defoe gone —"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The Company made Defoe possible. In fact, it made him and Slovetski inevitable," I told him flatly. "That's its one great crime. Whenever you take power completely out of the hands of the many, it winds up in fewer and fewer hands. Those histories I was reading last night prove that. Carmody, what do you know about your own Company? Or the world? Leave the consolidation of power in Company hands out of it, and what has happened to progress?"

He frowned. "Well, we've leveled off a bit. We had to. We couldn't risk —"

"Exactly. You couldn't risk research that would lead to increased longevity — too many pensioners. You couldn't risk going to Mars — unpredictable dangers. You had to make the world fit actuarial charts. I remember seeing one of the first suspendees awakened. He expected things we could have done fifty years ago — and never will do. How many men today work their way out of their class? And why have classes so rigidly stratified? I've been reading your own speeches of nearly fifty years ago. I've got them here, together with some tables. Like to see them?"

HE TOOK the papers silently and began going through them, his shock giving way to a grudging realization. Maybe without the jolt of his awakening, he'd have laughed them off, but nothing was easy to dismiss with the hell brewing outside. At last he looked up.

"Tom, I'll admit the many times when I've been worried. I've considered starting research again countless times. I've been aware that dependence was growing too heavy on the Company. But we can't just toss it aside. It did bring an end to major war, when such a war would have ruined the Earth completely. It showed that nobody had to starve — that hardly anyone had to lack for any necessity, or die for lack of care. You can't throw that away."

"You can throw away its unrelated power." I knew I didn't have the answers. All this had been growing slowly in my mind since I'd first found Benedetto a political prisoner, but a lifetime wasn't enough to think it out, even with the books I'd found.

But I had to try. "In the middle ages, they had morality and politics tied into one bundle, Carmody. The church ruled. It wasn't good and they finally had to divorce church and state. Maybe the same applies to administrative politics and economics. The Company has shown what can be done economically. The church has survived as a great moral

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

force outside material power. Now let's see if we can't put things in perspective.

"There's a precedent. The United States — the old government — was set up on the idea of balance of power: an elected Congress for the people to handle legislative tasks, a selected President to handle executive affairs, and a Judiciary mostly independent. On a world scale, as it can be done today — since the Company has really made it one world — the same can be done, with something like the Company to insure economics."

"I suppose every man who had any idealism has thought the same," Carmody said slowly. He sighed softly. "I remember trying to preach it to my father when I was just out of college. You're right. But can you set up such a perfect government? Can I? Tell me how, Tom, and I'll give you your chance, if I can."

Zorchi laughed cynically, but that was what I'd hoped Carmody might say.

"All right," I told him. "We can't do it. No one man is fit to rule, ever, or to establish rule. Oh, I had wish-dreams, a few days ago, I suppose, about what I'd do, *if!* But men have set out to establish new systems before, and done good jobs of it. Read the Constitution — a system put together artificially by expert political thinkers, and good for two hundred years, at least! And they didn't have our opportunities. For the first time, the world has to wait. Get the best minds you can, Carmody. Give them twenty-five years to work it out. They can come up with an answer. And then, when the world is awakened, you can start with it, fresh, without upsetting any old order. Is that your answer?"

"Most of it." There was a sudden light in his old eyes. "Yes, the sleep does make the chance possible. But how are you going to get the experts and assemble them?"

I pointed to Zorchi. "Hermes, the messenger of the gods. He's a jet pilot who can get all over the world. And he can move outside, without needing to worry about radiation."

"So?" Zorchi snorted again. "So, I am now your messenger, Weels! Do you think I would trouble myself so much for all of you, Weels?"

I grinned at him. "You defiantly speak of being a man. That makes you part of the human race. I'm simply taking you at your word."

"So?" he repeated, his face wooden. "Such a messenger would have much power, Weels. Suppose I choose to be Zorchi the ruler?"

"Not while Zorchi the man is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also Zorchi the freak," I said with deliberate cruelty. "Go look at yourself."

And suddenly he smiled, his lips drawing back from his teeth. "Weels, for the first time you are honest. And for that as well as that I *am* a man, I will be Zorchi the messenger. But first, should we not decide on a plan of action? Or do we first rule and then conquer?"

"We wait first," I told him.

On the wall, the radiation indicator clicked steadily, its needle moving further into the red.

XVIII

THE SECOND day, the television went off the air with the final curt announcement that anyone not inside the clinics at noon would be left outside permanently. Then the set went dead, leaving only the clucking and beeping of our own radiation indicator. I'd thrown it out twice and brought it back both times.

Civilization had ended on the third day, though all the conveniences in the villa went on smoothly, except for the meter reading that told us nothing could be smooth. It was higher than the predictions I had heard, though I still hoped that was only a sporadic local phenomenon that would level out later. In the face of that, it was hard to believe that even a few men would remain outside the clinics, though I was counting on it.

We waited another twenty-four hours, forcing ourselves to sit in the villa, discussing plans, when our nerves were yelling for action. We had only an estimate to go on. If we got there too soon, there would be more awake than we could handle. Too late and we'd be radiation cases, good for nothing but the vaults.

It was a relief to leave at last, taking our weapons in the truck. We were wearing the radiation suits, hoping they'd protect us, and Zorchi spent the last two days devising pads and straps to cushion and strengthen his developing legs.

The world was dead. Cars had been abandoned in the middle of the road, making driving difficult.

The towns and villas were deserted, boarded up or simply abandoned. We might have been the last men on Earth, and we felt that we were as we headed for Anzio. This wasn't just a road, or Naples — or all of Italy. It was the world.

Then Rena pointed. Ahead, a boy was walking beside a dog, the animal's left rear leg bound and splintered as if it had been broken. I started to slow, then forced myself to drive on. As we passed, I saw that the boy was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about fourteen, and his face was dirty and tear-streaked. He shook one fist at us, and came trudging on.

"If we win, we'll have the door open when he gets there," Rena said. "For him and his dog! If not, it won't matter how long it takes him. You couldn't stop, Tom."

It didn't make me feel any better. But now dusk was falling, and we slowed, waiting until it was dark to park quietly near the garage. In front of the entrance, I could see a small ring of fires, and by their light a few figures moving about. They were madmen, of course — and yet, probably less mad than others who must be prowling through the towns, looting for things they could never use.

It seemed incredible that any one could be outside, but the psychologists had apparently been right. These were determined men, willing to wait for the forlorn chance that some miracle might give them a futile, even more forlorn chance to try battering down the great doors. Maybe somewhere in the world, such a group might succeed. But not here. As I watched, there was a crackle of automatic gunfire from the entrance. The guards were awake, all right, and not taking chances on any poor devil getting too close.

THERE were no guards in the vault garage. We were prepared in case someone might be stationed inside the private entrance, as much prepared as we could be; since Carmody had been listed as still living, an ordinary guard who recognized him would probably let us in first and then try to report — giving us time to handle him. But we were lucky. The door opened to Carmody's top-secret combination.

"We designed such combinations into a few doors in case of internal revolution locally while no Underwriters were around. We never considered having an Underwriter lead a revolution from outside," he whispered to us.

The underground passage was deserted, and this time Carmody led through another corridor, to a stairs that seemed to wind up forever. Zorchi groaned, then caught himself.

"It leads to the main reception room," Carmody said.

With the men outside, most of the guards who still remained awake might be there. But we had to chance it. We stopped when we reached the top, catching our breath while Zorchi sank to the floor, writhing silently.

Then Rena threw back the door, Zorchi's rifle poked through, and I was leaping for the main door controls, hoping the memory I had was accurate. I was nearly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to them when the two guards standing beside them turned.

They yelled, just as my rifle spat. At that range, I couldn't miss. And behind, I heard Zorchi's gun spit. The second guard slumped sickly to the floor, holding his stomach. I grabbed for the controls, while other yells sounded, and feet began pounding toward me.

There was no time to look back. The doors were slowly moving apart and Carmody was beside me, smashing a maul from the storeroom onto the electronic controls of the atomic cannon. I twisted between the opening doors.

"We've seized the vaults," I shouted. "We need help. Any man who joins us will be saved!"

I couldn't wait to watch, but I heard a hoarse, answering shout, and the sound of feet.

Carmody's maul had ruined the door controls. But the other guards were nearly on us. I saw two more sprawled on the floor. Zorchi hadn't missed. Then Carmody's fingers had found another of the private doors that looked like simple panels here. Rena and Carmody were through, and I yanked Zorchi after me, just as a bullet whined over his head. Behind us, I heard uncontrolled yelling as men from outside began pouring in.

It was our only hope. They had to take care of the guards, who were still probably shocked at finding us *inside*. We headed for the private quarters where Defoe would be, praying that there would be only a few there.

THIS PASSAGE was useless to us, though. It led from office to office for the doctors who superintended here. We came out into an office, watching our chance for the hall we had to take. I could see the men who had been outside in action now. A few had guns of some kind, but the clubs in the hands of the others were just as deadly in such a desperation attack; men who had seen themselves already dead weren't afraid of chances. About a score of the expediter guards were trying to hold off at least twice their number.

Then the hall seemed clear and we leaped into it. Suddenly gongs began ringing everywhere. Some guard had finally reached or remembered the alarm system. Carmody cursed, and tried to move faster.

The small private vault for the executives lay through the administration quarters and down several levels, before it was entered through a short passageway. Carmody had mapped it for me often enough. But he knew it by physical memory, which was better than my training. He'd

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also taught me the combination, but I left the door to his practiced fingers when we came to it.

The elevator wasn't up. We couldn't wait. We raced down the stairs that circled it. Here Carmody's age told against him, and he fell behind. Rena and I were going down neck and neck with Zorchi throwing himself along with us. He had dropped his rifle and picked up a sub-machine gun from one of the fallen guards, and he clung to it now, using only one hand on the rail.

It was a reflection on a gun-barrel that saved us. The picked expediters were hidden in the dark mouth of the passageway, waiting for us to turn the stairs. But I caught a gleam of metal, and threw up my gun. Instantly, Zorchi was beside me, the sub-machine splitting as quickly as I could fire the first shot. "Aim for the wall. Ricochet!"

The ambushers had counted too much on surprise. They weren't ready to have the tables turned, nor for the trick Zorchi had suggested. Here we couldn't fire directly, but the bouncing shots worked almost as well. There were screams of men being hit, and the crazed pandemonium of others suddenly afraid.

Shots came toward us, but the wall that protected them — or was supposed to — ruined their shooting.

Zorchi abruptly dropped, landing with a thud on his side. I grunted sickly, thinking he was hit.

Then I saw the sub-machine gun point squarely into the passageway. It began spitting out death. By the time we could reach him, the expediters were dead or dying. There had been seven of them.

Zorchi staggered into the passage, through the bodies, crying something. I jumped after him, blinking my eyes to make out what he had seen. Then I caught sight of a door at the back being silently closed. It was a thick, massive slab, like the door to a bank vault.

Zorchi made a final leap that brought a sob of anguish as he landed on his weak legs, but his gun barrel slapped into the slit of opening. The door ground against it, strained and stopped. Zorchi pulled the trigger briefly.

FOR A SECOND, then, there was silence. A second later, Defoe's voice came out through the thin slit. "You win. Dr. Lawton and I are alone and unarmed. We're coming out."

The door began opening again, somewhat jerkily this time. I watched it, expecting a trick, but there was none.

Inside the vault, the first room was obviously for guards and for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PREFERRED RISK

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the control of the equipment needed to wash all contamination out of the air and to provide the place with security for a century, even if all the rest of the Earth turned into a radioactive hell.

Lawton was slumped beside the controls, his head cradled in his arms. But at the sight of us, he stood up groggily, his mouth open, and shock on his face.

Defoe's eyes widened a trifle, but he stood quietly, and the bleak smile never faltered. "Congratulations, Thomas," he said. "My one fault again — I underrated the opposition. I wasn't expecting miracles. Hello, Millen. Fancy meeting you here."

"Search the place," I ordered.

Carmody went past the two without looking at them, with Rena close behind. A minute later, I heard a triumphant shout. They came back with a cringing man who seemed totally unlike the genial Sam Gogarty who had first introduced me to fine food and to Rena. His eyes were on Carmody, and his skin was gray white. He started to babble incoherently.

Carmody grinned at him. "You've got things twisted, Gogarty. Tom Wills is in charge of this affair." He turned toward one of the smaller offices. "As I remember it, there should be a transmitting setup in here. I want to make sure it works. If it does, some of the Underwriters are going to get a surprise, unless they're suspended."

Gogarty watched him go, and then sank slowly to a chair, shaking his head as he looked up at me. His lips twisted into bitter resignation. "You wouldn't understand, Tom. All my life, worked for things. Class-C, digging in a mine, eating Class-D, getting no fun, so I could buy Class-B employment. Then Class-A. Not many can do it, but I sweated it out. Thirty years living like a dog and killing myself with work and study. Not even a real woman until I met Susan, and she went to Defoe. But I wanted it easier for the young men. I wanted everybody to have a good life. No harm to anyone. Pull together, and forget the tough times. Then you had to come and blow the roof off. . ."

I FELT SICK. It was probably all true, and few men could make it. But if that's what it took to advance under the Company rules, it was justification enough for our fight. "You'll be all right, Sam," I told him. "You'll go to sleep with the others. And when you wake up, you may have to work like hell again, but it'll be to rebuild the Earth, not to ruin it. Maybe there'll even be a chance with Susan again."

Defoe laughed sardonically.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Very nice, Thomas. And I suppose you mean it. What's in the future for me?"

"Suspension until the new government gets organized and can decide your case. I'd like to vote now for permanent suspension."

His face lost some of his amusement. Then he shrugged. "All right, I suppose I knew that. But now will you satisfy my curiosity? Just how *did* you work the business with Bay 100?"

"What happened to Slovetski?" I asked. I couldn't be sure about some of my suspicions over Benedetto's death, but I couldn't take chances that the man might still be loose somewhere, or else hiding out here until we were off guard.

He shook his head. "I can answer, but I'm waiting for a better offer."

"Sam?" I asked.

Gogarty nodded slowly. "All right, Tom. I guess you're the boss now. And I think I'm even glad of it. I always liked you. I'll answer about Slovetski."

Defoe snarled and swung, then saw my rifle coming up, and straightened again. "You win once more, Thomas. Your great international rebel cooperated with us very nicely after we caught him. We arranged for him to receive all calls to his most secret hideout right here in this room. It netted us his fellow con-

Study at home with the

UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

SHARE THE RESOURCES of the University for a life long investment in self-improvement . . . wherever you may be. Broaden your horizons . . . add to your intellectual skills and fund of knowledge . . . improve your professional competence.

150 COURSES for adults . . . in Philosophy, Psychology, Mathematics (beginning and advanced), Creative Writing, Semantics, Modern Art, Meteorology, Pharmacology, Poetry, Social Sciences, and other fields. INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION . . . begin at any time . . . study at your convenience, AT HOME.

ENJOY an absorbing conversation-by-mail with a University instructor, in courses like . . .

Symbolic Logic
Elementary Theory of Numbers
Human Relations in Industry
Culture and Personality

For full information write for the Home-Study ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Home-Study Dept.
UNIVERSITY
OF CHICAGO
Box 385, Chicago 37, Ill.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spirators — including your father, Miss dell'Angela!"

She gasped faintly, but her head came up at once. "Nikolas was no traitor. You're lying!"

"Why should I lie?" he asked. "With the right use of certain drugs, any man can become a traitor. And Dr. Lawton is an expert on drugs."

"Where is he?" I asked.

He shrugged. "How should I know? He wanted a radioactive world, so I let him enjoy it. We put him outside just before we closed the doors permanently."

Gogarty nodded confirmation. I turned it over. He might even have been one of the men waiting outside. But it wouldn't matter. Without his organization and with a world where life outside was impossible, Slovetski's power was finished.

I turned to Zorchi. "The men who broke in will be going crazy soon," I told him. "While Rena finds the paging system and reassures them they'll all be treated in the reception room, how about getting Lawton to locate and revive a couple of the doctors you know and trust?"

RENA CAME back from the paging system, and Zorchi prodded Lawton with the gun, heading him toward the files that would show the location of the doctors. Gogarty stood up doubtfully, but I shook my head. Zorchi was able to handle a man of Lawton's type, even without full use of his legs, and I couldn't trust Gogarty yet.

"You can give me a hand with Defoe, Sam," I suggested. "We'd better strap him down first."

Gogarty nodded, and then suddenly let out a shocked cry, and was cringing back!

In the split second when both Rena and I had looked away, Defoe had whipped out an automatic and was now covering us, his teeth exposed in a taut smile. "Never underestimate an opponent, Thomas," he said. "And never believe what he says. You should have searched me, you know."

The gun was centered on Rena. and he waited, as if expecting me to make some move. All I could do was stand there, cursing myself. I'd thought of everything — except the obvious!

Defoe backed toward the door and slipped around it, drawing its heavy weight slowly shut until only a crack showed. Then he laughed. "Give my love to Millen," he said, and laughed softly.

I jumped for the door, but his feet were already moving out of the passage. The door began opening again, but I knew it was too late. Then, it was open. And amazingly, Defoe stood not ten feet away.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the other end of the passage, a ragged bloody figure was standing, swaying slowly from side to side, holding a rifle. I took a second look to recognize Nikolas Slovetski. He was moving slowly toward Defoe. And now Defoe jerked back and began frantically digging for the automatic he must have pocketed.

Slovetski leaped, tossing the gun aside in a way that indicated it must have been empty. A bullet from Defoe's automatic caught his shoulder in mid-leap, but it couldn't stop him. He crashed squarely on Defoe, swinging a knife as the other went down. It missed, ringing against the hard floor.

I'd come unfrozen by then. I kicked the knife aside and grabbed the gun from Defoe's hands. Slovetski lay limp on him, and I rolled the smaller man aside.

DEFOE WAS out cold from the blow of his head hitting the floor. Gogarty had come out behind me and now began binding him up. He opened his eyes slowly, blinked, and tried to grin as he stared at the bonds. He swung his head to the figure on the floor beside him. "Shall we go quietly, Nikolas?" he asked, as Gogarty picked him up and carried him back to the private vault.

OVER 50,000 *THRILLING WORDS!*

not hours, but days of reading!

35¢ BAG of BOOKS!

Three full-length science fiction novels!

While they last — surprise packages of three exciting new novels (over 100 pages each). A sample from our bulging shelves, by today's favorite science fiction writers. Only 35c for the three-book package! A real bargain!

SEND ONLY **35c** TODAY!

This SPECIAL OFFER is so you may sample our books at least expense. After writing you will get our monthly, ever-changing catalog of great bargains, classics, and rare finds in science fiction and fantasy. No obligation. Don't wait. Write today!

READER'S SERVICE BOOK CLUB *The favorite source of serious science fiction readers* **Dept. G-5, 119 E. San Fernando St., San Jose 13, Calif.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But his sarcasm was wasted on Slovetski. The man must have been dying as he stumbled and groped his way toward the place where he knew Defoe must be. And the bullet in the shoulder had finished him. Rena bent over him, a faint sob on her lips.

Surprisingly, he fought his way back to consciousness, staring up at her. "Rena," he said weakly. "Benedetto! I loved him. I —" Then his head rolled toward me. "At least, I lived to die in a revolution, Thomas. Dirty business, revolution. When in the course of human events, it becomes —"

He died before he could finish. I went looking for Lawton, to make sure Defoe was suspended at once. He'd be the last political suspendee, if I had anything to do with it, but there would be a certain pleasure in watching Lawton do the job.

XIX

THE DOORS of the reception hall were closed again, but there was no lock now. One of the two doctors whom Zorchi had trusted was there now, waiting for the stragglers who came in slowly as a result of our broadcast. We couldn't reach them all, of course, but some could be saved. The men who had fought with us were treated and suspended. Even the boy and his dog had finally reached us and been put away.

In the main room of the executive vault, Carmody was waiting for Rena and me as we came in, haggard from lack of sleep, but somehow younger-looking than he had been since we had first revived him.

He stood up, managing a tired smile. "The first work's done, Tom," he said. "It wasn't too hard, once they learned Defoe was suspended; a lot of the others were afraid of him, I guess. So far, I've only contacted the ones I can trust, but it's a beginning. I've gotten tapes of their delegation of authority to you as acting assistant Chief Underwriter. I guess the factor that influenced them most was your willingness to give up all hopes of suspension for the emergency. And having Zorchi was a help, too — one man like him is worth an army now. I'll introduce you tomorrow."

He stumbled out, heading toward the sleeping quarters.

Well, I had the chance I'd wanted. And I had his promise to put off suspension until things were running properly. With time to develop a small staff, and with a chance to begin the work of locating the men to study the problems that had to be solved, I couldn't ask for much more.

Zorchi grinned at me. "Em-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peror Weels!" he mocked.

I grinned back. "If you ever say that seriously, Luigi, I want you to say it with a bullet through my brain. I've seen enough cases of power corrupting."

FOR A second, he studied me. "If that day should come, then there shall be the bullet. But now, even I must sleep," he said.

Then he glanced at Rena. "I have left orders that a priest should be wakened."

She colored faintly.

"You'll be best man, I suppose?" I asked.

This time, even his beard couldn't conceal his amusement. "Is Zorchi not always the best man?" he asked as he left us alone.

I stared at the vault that would be my home for the next twenty-five or fifty years — until I was an old man, and the rest of the world was ready to be awakened. "It's a lousy place to spend a honeymoon," I told Rena.

She leaned against me. "But perhaps a good place to bring up children," she said. "A place to teach them that their children will have a good world, Tom. That's all a woman ever wants, I guess."

I drew her to me. It was a good way to think of the future, whatever happened. And it *would* be a better world, where the virtues of the Company could be used.

Probably it wouldn't be perfect.

Even the best form of government all the experts could devise couldn't offer a permanent solution. But it could give men a chance to fight their way to a still better world.

—EDSON McCANN

Make your own baby genius computers

GENIACS

Scientific - Entertaining - Instructive - Safe

with our new construction kit including all parts and instructions:

KT: GENIACS—SMALL ELECTRIC BRAIN MACHINES—AND HOW TO MAKE THEM

This kit gives simple instructions, construction plans, and a complete set of parts for making over 25 arithmetical, logical, reasoning, computing, puzzle-solving, and game-playing machines (see list below). Each Geniac displays intelligent behavior, runs on one flashlight battery, requires no soldering (all connections with nuts and bolts). This kit is the outcome of five years of our design and development work with small robots. This kit is simple enough for intelligent boys; yet instructive to anyone because it demonstrates in easily put-together models the fascinating variety of computing and reasoning circuits. Kit, including instructions and all parts, K1. **$19.95**

Returnable in one week for full refund if not satisfactory. The parts include six multiple switches of a new design; all parts are accurately machined; the parts alone if bought in small quantities would cost over **$40.00**.

Some of the possible GENIACS: Logic Machines: Comparing; Reasoning; Syllog sm Machines: Intelligence Test. Game-Playing Machines: Tic-tac-Toe, Nim. Arithmetical Machines (both decimal and binary): Adder, Subtractor, Multiplier, Divider, Arithmetical Carrying. Cryptographic Machines: Secret Coder, Secret Decoder, Combination Locks. Simple Machines: Burglar Alarm, Automatic Oil Furnace Circuit, Puzzle-Solving Machines: the Space Ship Airlock; the Fox, Hen, Corn, and Hired Man; Douglas Macdonald's Will; the Uranium Shipment and the Space Pirates.

OVER 400 PARTS AND COMPONENTS!

***price only* $19.95**

Money Back Guarantee If Not Satisfied

——MAIL THIS COUPON——

GENIAC PROJECT H100

36 W. 11th STREET NEW YORK 11, N. Y.

Please send me

1 **GENIAC** Electric Construction Kit and manual

$19.95 (East of Mississippi)
$20.95 (Elsewhere in United States)
$21.95 (Outside the United States)

Returnable in seven days for full refund if not satisfied.

I enclose $ ..... in full payment.
My name and address are attached.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Continued from page 2)

blunt spaceman's idiom: We need androids like a hole in the hull — till we reach the stars.

His argument that the "disgusting uses" to which we've put lab-made life is downright nonsensical. If anything, they have helped by footing research bills.

Amazon Adventure by Cherry Lane. Wow Publishers, Miami; 1 reel, 1.5 credits

Another wheelchair tour of jungle suburbia. Diana Beresford, a restless heiress, falls in love with Oto, chief (mayor, naturally) of the Jivaro tribe, and they open a supposedly prosperous souvenir shop — as if every home weren't already overloaded with shrunken heads!

The one genuine note is the description of the manufacture of assembly-line shrunken android heads for export. This, by the way, is one of the "disgusting uses" Brody objects to, even though the manufacturers certify the heads were never alive.

The Romance of Disease by Ed and Marge Ulna. EMU Bukreels, Emutown; ½ reel, ½ credit

This juvenile (age 6-10) from the fabulously successful Ulnas is a series of short romanticized biographies of the people who conquered everything from cancer to canker and how the cures were found and operate. Old stuff, but not to the kiddies.

Undersea Murder by Murray Hill. Gore, Inc.; 1 reel, 1 credit

Mike Ballpeen, rough, tough foreman in Kelp Colony and detective on the side, is up to his usual ingenious tricks when he traps the ambush slayer of a sludge-sled driver. Naturally, he is sleuth, judge, jury and executioner, this time with a harpoon in the midriff. A very workmanlike job, which isn't surprising — Murray Hill is an undersea workman who writes in his spare time.

Nature's Call by Bron O'Lorde. Natural Associates, Zululand; 19 clips, 2/5 credit

Natural Associates probably have something when they urge us to leave our urban society for the land. There's only one problem: where can you find land, outside of city botanical gardens?

Transmutation for the Home, edited by How-2 Kits, Ltd., Zurich; 4 reels, blueprints, tools, raw materials; 18 credits

Arrived too late for review.

Posterity Are We by Margot Fotheringhill. Poetry House, Middlesex; 1 reel, 5 credits

Arrived too soon for review.

—H. L. GOLD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anyone For Doomsday?

Not You!

Not Us!

But it COULD happen, for anything is possible. And anything that is *possible*—and can make a good story—goes into the pages of GALAXY Science Fiction.

Doomsday is only *one* possible future out of many:

The conquest of other planets . . .

Invasions of Earth . . .

Other dimensions . . .

Immortality . . .

Strange and exciting future civilizations that have their roots right in the present . . .

You'll find all these and a lot more in GALAXY, the magazine of *ideas brought vividly to life!*

For 12 convincing issues, send $3.50
or $6.00 for 24 issues,

TO

GALAXY Publishing Corp.
421 Hudson Street • New York 14, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Looking For Us, Professor?

"Hmm, yes. I was just cogitating upon the causes of GALAXY Science Fiction's phenomenal growth in popularity."

"And that needs an explanation, Professor?"

"From a socio-psychological viewpoint, most definitely. To what do you attribute the constant increase of interest?"

"Well . . . let's try it this way, Professor. Suppose we ask the questions and you answer them."

"So? A bit unusual, but go right ahead."

"Do you think atomic doom is the only future for mankind?"

"Not exactly, but the newspapers and the commentators—"

"Of course. Well, we SHOW other possible futures. Do you believe we will be able to leave the Earth?"

"Eventually, perhaps. But not in our lifetime."

"We don't agree. Assuming you're right, though, isn't that all the more reason to want to know what we'll find on other planets, Professor?"

"I think I see what you mean."

"Can we achieve immortality?"

"Ah. Hum. I've often wondered."

"And travel to different eras in time?"

"That would be exciting."

"And you've been trying to discover why GALAXY is growing so popular? Every idea we've mentioned—and a lot more, besides—is treated dramatically and vividly in GALAXY! You really *live* them!"

"Umm. How do I subscribe? After all, one shouldn't resist a trend, should one? Heh, heh!"

"Just fill out the coupon—or make out your own order and send it in. The coupon's for your convenience, not ours. And now you'll be one of us!"

Send me 1 year subscription to GALAXY $3.50—2 years $6.00

ENCLOSED FIND

YOUR NAME..... $.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY..... STATE.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED